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W. G. Marshall

Hambleton

1894



POEMS

BY

VIOLET FANE

VOLUME THE SECOND

NOTE.—*Three hundred and sixty-five copies printed for
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Currie, Mary Montgomery, ...

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BY

VIOLET FANE, pseud.

With Portrait engraved by E. Stodart

"Etre, et rester en dehors de tout."—SAINTE-BEUVE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND

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CONTENTS.

1880.

"COLLECTED VERSES."—(SELECTIONS FROM.)

	PAGE
THE CENTENARIAN	3
A LETTER	11
THE GHOST STORY	15
TIME	24
AFTERWARDS	30

1889

"AUTUMN SONGS."—(SELECTIONS FROM.)

THE SCARAB	35
LIFE'S AFTERNOON	44
CONTRASTS: A SONG OF THE WIND	50
TWO PICTURES	51
VICTORIA. 21ST JUNE 1887	53
UPON A STATUETTE REPRESENTING LOVE AND DEATH	54
THE MER-BABY	56
THE LAMENT OF A WHITE ROSE	59
VOL. II.	b

	PAGE
A CHANCE LIKENESS	61
CLARA : AGED SEVENTEEN	62
HAZELY HEATH	64
SOUVENIR	65
AN EGOTIST'S CREED	67
AN EQUINOCTIAL GALE	70
ON CHRISTMAS-EVE	71
WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF "THE WORKS OF SHEN- STONE" WHICH HAD BELONGED TO LORD BYRON	74
A FABLE	76
SONG : "I WONDER WILL YOU TWINE FOR ME," ETC.	77
SNOW AT CHRISTMAS	79
"SHE WILL NOT WAKE ! "	80
A MAY MEETING	84
THE GUEST-CHAMBER	86
THE RETURN OF THE BELOVED	87
FALSE OR TRUE ?	89
IN MEMORIAM	94
A HOMELESS LOVE	95
SIX SONNETS :—	
I. CONCENTRATION	98
II. LOVE'S VANITY	99
III. UNCERTAINTY	100
IV. THE SLAVE TURNED TYRANT	101
V. THE VOW	102
VI. THE VOW BROKEN	103

CONTENTS.

vii

	PAGE
MEMORIES. WRITTEN ON AN ANNIVERSARY	104
A WISH	105
THE BEST AND THE WORST	107

1890-2.

THE LAST WORDS OF DON CARLOS	111
"FIN DE SIÈCLE"	123
THE OLD ROCKING HORSE	125
FIRST LOVE	130
BY THE SEA	132
AN "OLD, OLD STORY"	133
TO THE BIRDS (AFTER THE BREAK-UP OF A LONG FROST)	138
A WIFE'S CONFESSION	140
THE DORMOUSE	154
A LATTER-DAY MARTYR	158
TO A NEW SUNDIAL	163
BY THE INDIAN MAIL	165
ALL SOULS' DAY	167
AT THE CLOSE OF A YEAR	170

1880.

21 VOL. II.

A

THE CENTENARIAN.

ONE hundred years ! . . . Yet all the world seems

young,

And, like my heart, still throbbing to the tune

Of soft recurring music ! . . .

Flower-wise,

Budding, and bearing blossom and ripe fruit,

The hopes and aspirations of old time

Would put forth branch and tendril, and unfold

Facing the sunlight, but a spectre-hand,

Bony, and shrunken, as is now mine own,

Blights ev'ry blossom, even in the bud,

Whilst croaking accents whisper in mine ear,

"Stay ! Thou art old ! . . . But three-score years

and ten

Is man's appointed time upon the earth ;

What matter if the heart within thy breast

Keeps cognisance of spring or winter-time,

Storm or fine weather, ebb or flow of tide,

Or changing moons ? So, in a ruin'd hall

May wond'ring men hear some old timepiece tick

Through sudden jar of outward circumstance,
Then sink again to silence. Young men dream,
And plan and build, and sowing, hope to reap ;
But *thou*, mere accident and freak of Fate,
Wait in thy dreamless twilight, nor presume
To seek preferment in the banner'd lists
Where Youth strives on, and Beauty yields the
prize !”

Ay, even so ! . . .

And yet, not long ago
(Or so it seems to me), mine eyes were bright,
My cheeks aglow, and all the blood aflame
In these poor knotted veins ! Then, with the rest,
By flower-strewn lawn or trellis'd window-pane
I too could sing of love, whilst rosy lips
Smiled down responsive ! . . .

I remember, once,
Walking in summer, by the green sea-downs,
With one I loved unwittingly the while ;
The sky was blue, and on the bluer wave
We saw the changing ships, like white-wing'd
moths,
Flit down the far sea-line, or, merged in sky,
Race with the clouds. Sheer from the hanging
cliff

Clung bramble-blossoms, myrtle, and wild heath,
Whilst far ahead, a forest of black firs
Bearded the ocean-bank, and seem'd a goal
Whither we two were bound,—to what intent
My schoolboy heart wist not. Fine flower of speech
Comes not to lads o'er soon, and I remember,
Looking from right to left, from sea to shore,
From glow of heaven to bloom of maidenhood,
My soul seem'd bound in silence, whilst the girl
Talk'd on of many things,—mere sounding words
Beside the secret gnawing at my heart,
The which she guess'd,—being a woman born,
Although I dared not tell it to myself,
Fearing, maybe, to lose it. By-and-by,
Passing in front of me, she reached her hand
Seaward, to gather from the jutting cliff
Blossom or branch, when, sudden, crashing down
Fell shower of loosen'd stones and tufted grass,
Whilst on the utmost edge, I saw my love
Clinging for very life to yielding briers,
And calling me, with horror in her eyes,
To save her if I loved her.

All this scene

Is clear as yesterday, and yet the years
Have blurr'd out later memories! Ah, *then*

(When I had thought her dead, and laid her down
Upon the sward, beneath the straight-stemm'd firs)
My words came fast enough ! . . . She did not die,
But *now*, or she is dead, or old, *so old*,—
I dare not think of her ; her fair face fled
From out the world ! And whither ? (if she lives)—
Ah, whither ? . . . whither ? . . . Gone to meet
mine own

Of long ago, that bending down to hers
There in the deep'ning twilight, found her lips.

And this was over eighty years ago ! . . .
A long man's life ! Ah, God, be good to me,
Nor let my living turn to a reproach
Till men shall mock at me !

. . . I know not wherefore
To-day, whilst looking from this balcony
At sky, and ocean, with its many sails,
This memory came to me, with the scent
Of brine and seaweed. Even thus, that day,
Like mimic ships, and dragons, and strong towers,
And floating seraphs, wing'd, with streaming hair,
Seem'd all the hurrying clouds, and, as to-day,
So on that yesterday of long ago
The sea-birds, white against the ocean-blue,

And man, in his poor ant-hill, toils and strives,
And loves, and hates, and suffers? . . .

Ah, how small,

How poor a thing, O Lord, with all made smooth,
Is this our life! A little emmet's hour,
Wherein we have not even time to frame
The scaffolding for mere foundation of thought!
One hundred years! . . . And am I better
strung

To meet adversity? . . . Yea, better far,
Wiser and stronger, as a corpse is wise
And strong to suffer, bearing scorn of fate,
Buffet of foe, and kissing of sweet lips,
Bearing all these alike! . . .

One hundred years!

And all so green at core, so notched of bark,
The two men of me made so manifest
The soul would seem to wrestle with the flesh
And taunt it for a laggard! 'Tis as though
I took my way through life in hood and mask,
My inner self conceal'd, yet ready primed
To leap to action! In the damp church-vaults
Dare they to fasten down this eager spirit
That chafes his fainter brother, and would fly
With yonder sea-gull o'er the streak of gold

Flecking the far horizon? Wherefore here
(In this my breast) lives fire at noble deed,
Desire for bold endeavour and high truth,
Or hunger for dear love, whilst eyes are dim,
Whilst footsteps falter, and this wan white beard
Mocks me without the mirror, straying down
To meet the beating of my baffled heart?

I say, to keep me brave, "He cannot die,
This inner man, that rises up so strong
Within the crumbling stonework of his prison :"
But Reason hath a voice as well as Hope,
And in some seasons, crouching at my side,
She drones her dismal teachings! . . .

It was strange

That on this ev'ning, looking at the ships,
My mind went back, ay, even eighty years,
To hug a ling'ring memory! The ships
Sail on and on, across the window-square,
And pass and vanish; it is even so
With us and our endeavour! . . . Draw the
blinds,
And close the window, for the ev'ning air
Gnaws at my heart, and chills the weaker man;
Ay, but the soul is rampant, and will live

To set its foot upon this wither'd flesh
And cry out "Victory!"

One hundred years!

If God hath not forgotten me, ere long ;

I too may read His riddle. . . . I must wait ! . .

A LETTER.

"I AM sitting alone in the garden to-day, though
the summer is well-nigh dead ;
We have gathered the fruit, and garner'd the hay,
and the withering woods are red,
And the beds on the terrace are yet aglow, and the
roses are clustering still,
But the tenderer blossoms are all laid low, and the
evening breeze grows chill
A time-serving robin comes chirruping near ; he is
'ware of a terrible day,
When the beds shall be bare and the woodlands
sere, so he chirrups while chirrup he may.
The children are shouting, with kite and with ball,
away by the hazel-wood lane,
And I—I have stolen away from them all, just to
write to you once again.

"But of what can I tell you, my only friend ?
That I miss you by night and by day ?
That the dreariest hours are these that I spend
since the one when you journey'd away ?

That your form seems beside me when others are
by, and your head on my bosom at night ?
That regrets will arise and ambitions die,—is it
thus that you would I should write ?
Or else, of the questions up yonder, in town ; of
the waverings to and fro,
Of the spirits of men, reeling up and down, as
uncertain of whither to go ?
They are dallying now with a Christless creed, for
the olden-time fancies seem dead,
Like flowers that have wither'd and run to seed,
and men raise up these new ones instead.
But the tree is too fresh in the soil as yet, and they
know not what fruit it will bear ;
And so still there are some with their minds firm-
set t'wards the desolate altars that were ;
Whose feet seem to wander away from the light,
into shadowy pathways well trod,
Calling out for their Eve, or their Aphrodite, or
Mary the mother of God.

“ But around me these clamouring voices arose as
the sound of an unknown tongue,
Or the caws from yon cloud of harvesting crows
flying home from the fields with their young ;

It may seem to you strange that I hope and wait,
knowing well that I never may know ;
But I sit in my twilight, and bow to my fate, con-
tented that things should be so ;
Whilst I hear of man rising up after man, asking
who it was kicked off the ball ?
It was so, I am told, since the world began, 'twill
be so to the ending of all.

“But, as heedless of all these changes of thought,
of this vast under-current of Doubt,
We smiled and we sorrow'd, we sold and we
bought, and we jested at dance and at rout.
There was never an echo'd step on the stair, or a
form at the turn of the street,
But my heart leapt up ready to greet you there,
and to throb at the sound of your feet.
Yet *here*, where the bracken waves under the pine,
and the heather glows pink on the hill,—
It is here, in this home that was yours and mine,
that your spirit seems lingering still ;
And, on days like this, when the summer is done,
and the children are gone to their play,
I can sit me down in the garden alone, and say all
that I hunger to say.

For it seems to me now, at the turn of the year,
ere the tempests of Winter blow,
I must send a 'good morrow' to you, my dear,
even whether you hear it or no ;
For it lightens my heart of some part of its woe,
and dries some of the tears that I weep,
Ere I seek for the worthiest blossoms that blow,
which may die on the turf where you sleep."

THE GHOST STORY.

ROUND-EYED and open-eared, the children sat
To hear the story, by their mother's knee,
Close to the glowing hearth. Without, the wind
Made mournful music—sighing at the pane
And rocking the great cedars. Now and then
Fox-tail of fir, or swaying ivy spray,
Or leaf, storm-driven, seem'd a goblin hand
Feeling to find the bolt and enter in.
A sense of mystery was in the air ;
Familiar things look'd other than their wont ;
Even the calm face of the ticking clock
Seem'd human, and the flick'ring tongues of flame
Fiend-like and ominous.

“ On such a night—
On such a night as this ” (the mother spoke,
Whilst all the children nestled near her gown)—
“ On such a night as this—long, long ago,
When ladies' shoes were pointed, and their robes
Of cloth-of-gold, trimm'd round with miniver,

Like kings' and queens' upon the playing-cards—
Just so the tempest howled—on such a night.”
“Oh!” cried the children (ev'ry yellow hair
Bristling expectant, as each cherub face
Paled with a growing ecstasy of horror).
“Remember,” said the mother, as she raised
Her slender fingers, all aglow with rings,—
“Remember, first, *the story is not true*,
Since well we know that fairies and poor ghosts,
Will-o'-the-wisps, magicians, and the like,—
All these, with vampires, witches, and wehr-wolves,
Are only meant to live in story-books,
And speed a winter's evening ; rest assured
This world we live in is no place for them ;
No one has seen them, save with fever'd brain
Or tortured fancy ; but, suppose their sight
Healthful, and ev'ry fancied phantom real,
A poor sad ghost, at best a very shade,
Could do no harm to spirits joined to flesh,
Since these are far the stronger—two to one.
But, once for all, before my tale begins,
You know it is not true.”

“We know, we know,
We know it is not true,” the children cried ;
“Yet tell it all the same !”

“Long, long ago”

(The story thus began), “in ancient times,
An old grey Baron, with an only girl,
Dwelt in a castle, peak'd and turreted,
In Picardy.”

And then the mother told
Of siege and sally and assault of arms,
Of drawbridge hoisted, and of loopholes lined
With cross-bow men, whose shafts so swiftly sped
They seem'd a very rainfall, wing'd and barb'd.
And then she told how, foremost in the fray,
As victor, too, at tilt and tournament
And deeds of daring, was a youthful knight,
Of noble presence, who had gain'd by stealth
The maiden's love, with promise of her hand ;
Which should her sire withhold, the lady swore
To wed no other. So the days went by ;
And, hoping still, nor daring tell his hope
To the stern father, lest he dash it down,
The knight, to make preferment doubly sure
Through braver show of prowess, bade adieu
To France and lady-love, and bent his way
(After renewal of his plighted troth)
To Palestine, to fight the Saracen.

Then pined the lady in her castle-bower,

VOL. II.

B

And all day long disconsolate she sat,
Her lute discarded and her silks unwound,
Dreaming beside the lattice. Suns and moons
Rose and declined, and re-rose anew,
And still he came not. Then the years went by,
The weary years, and still he did not come ;
And at her heart there grew a gnawing fear
That he had fallen in battle. Suns and moons
Rose and declined afresh, and re-rose ;
And then (the tidings of his certain death
Stunning her into marble) she was wed,
As one sleep-walking, to a worthy man,
Her father's friend and all as old as he,
Yet brave and excellent.

And as one night

(On such a night as this), beside the hearth
She sat, and watch'd the flick'ring of the flames,
That leapt and darted, whilst in high-back'd chair
Half-slumber'd the good knight her graybeard
spouse,
And then (as now) the winds of heaven, let loose,
Made roar and tumult, all her heart grew sad
Through thinking of her love of long ago,
The Picard knight, that sometime over sea
Was slain in battle of the Saracen.

Her heart grew sad, and both her eyes grew dim ;
When, looking up, alert at sudden sound,
Uprose the lazy bloodhound at her feet,
And shook himself, and growl'd. With startled
cry,

Hands clasp'd, and hair unbound, and eyes amazed,
She sprang towards the door ; since there, array'd
In coat of mail, his visor all unhook'd,
And his face pale as is the face of death,—
There stood the form of him she counted slain—
The Picard knight !

Then all the children cried
(The eldest calming with her soothing hand
A shudd'ring sister), "Ah, it was a ghost !
It was a ghost ! The story is not true !"
"Nay," said the mother, "it was not a ghost
(Though had it been, the less her cause for fear) ;
For though he neither spoke, nor clasp'd her hand,
Looking but very sorrowful indeed,
And so departing, it was told next day
How some retainers, loit'ring at the gate,
Had seen the young knight enter, with his train,
Nor had they question'd one they knew for friend ;
So let him pass, and after, pass away,
When (riding out) a varlet, leaning back,

Hiss'd out this parting wager to a page,
'If my good master steers from Palestine
Cleft in the skull, and hinder'd in the reach,
A *second* time, *alive*, take thou my steed,
Trappings and all, and this my trusty brand,
And smite me for a liar!' Jestings thus,
The retinue pass'd out across the bridge,
Their leader silent. He had seen and known,
And all his heart grew bitter; and, once more,
Stricken alike in body and in soul,
He sought the Holy Land, to fight afresh,
And try forgetting."

Then the mother told
How, overshadowed by a memory,
The lady lived a sad though peaceful life,
Praying much secretly, and how, at length,
(As years went on), such curly heads as theirs
That listen'd now intently to the tale
Were group'd around her knees. And once again,
When all of these lay sleeping in their beds,
She sat at Christmas-time beside the hearth,
Watching the great yule log that flaked and fell,
Crumbling and flaring, as it lay at length
Betwixt the brazen dogs; when, suddenly,
She heard a sound as of a troop of horse

Spurring across the drawbridge furiously,
As though pursued ; and scarcely this had died
When a chill blast flutter'd the arras-folds
That hid the doorway, and within it stood
The young Crusader, pale as heretofore,
Yet with a milder look, which seem'd to say,
"Thy fault is pardoned."

"And was *this* a ghost?"

Asked all the children.

"Yes," the mother said,
"This was a ghost indeed (so runs the tale,—
As true a ghost as lives in story-books);
For, fighting out in Palestine, the knight
Was truly slain in battle ; and once dead,
He grasp'd all wisdom, and he knew her heart,
And so forgave her."

Here the mother paused,
And, gazing at the embers of the fire,
As one that strains o'er utmost edge of sea,
Nor knows what lies between, she seem'd alone
With some sad fancy, or as if, by chance,
All imperceptibly, the story took
Its colour from her own that told the tale,
And stirr'd a buried depth. For there are times
When, through some transient outward influence,

Sighing of autumn winds, or bar of song,
Or scent of garden-blossoms, thoughts arise
Which hold us spellbound.

“Is the story done?”

The children ask'd at length ; and, thus aroused,
With quick-drawn sigh, she said, “The tale is
done ;”

Then, one by one, impatient of her mood,
They slipp'd away, and left her there alone,
Musing beside the embers.

Leaning back,
A feather fan held lightly in her hand,
What voices seem to murmur in her ears
From out the dying embers in the hearth !
What airy castles, peak'd and turreted,
Rise at her bidding ! Hath her fancy fled
Back to the olden time, and fall those tears
Through thinking of the youthful Picard knight
That died in Palestine, or for the dame
Who, loving well, yet broke her plighted troth
And wed another, proving loyal wife,
And looking only on her lover's face
In ghostly vision ? Who may read aright
Tear-drop or passing smile, or guess her mind,
As, out of sight, she hears the children cry,

“Remember this was very long ago,
When ladies' shoes were pointed, and their robes,
Like kings' and queens' upon the playing-cards,
Trimm'd round with miniver ; besides, you know,
The story is not true.”

TIME.

I.

OF Time what may a poet sing,
Who sees his seasons come and go,
With heart that falters and eyes askance?
Who reads with sad prophetic glance
The pitiful tale of the dead rose-garden
All folded away in the buds of the spring,
And dreams, awake, of the summer glow,
Whilst snow-flakes fall, and whilst hoar-frosts
harden,
Yet hopes for nothing from change or chance,—
How may a poet sing, and *know*?

II.

Let him rise and tune to a mingled measure,
Blood and roses alike bloom red—
Pleasure in pain, and pain in pleasure—
Bitter the hunger, and bitter the bread!

Time will tarnish a tawdry treasure,
Turn gold to silver, and silver to lead ;
Rise up and tune to a mingled measure :
Of Time, our master, what may be said ?

III.

Boy and girl we have play'd together,
Hearts in slumber, and heads in air—
Maiden trim with the floating feather,
Sailor-lad, with a future clear,
Snatching a kiss as he climb'd the stair—
(" Kiss me," he said, on the twilight stair,
Half for pastime, and half in sorrow)—
Sailor-lad, that would sail to-morrow
Out to the uttermost hemisphere.
A few hot tears, and a lock of hair,
And a widow'd heart in the summer weather,
A widow'd heart for the half of a year,
And the satisfied sense of a secret care,
Whilst squirrels were sporting and thrushes sung,
And the old folks whisper'd and gossip'd together,
Each one snug in an easy-chair,
And murmur'd low, " Beware, beware !
Not a word of this, lest the child should hear ;"
Heart of my heart ! it was good to be young !

IV.

Good ships have foundered the whole world over,
For the sea is a grave, and some hearts are sore
For stately ship and for sailor-lover
That never again come back to the shore.
But the maid is a bride, and the bride a mother
(Bud, and blossom, and blown-out flower),
And the new-born lives, one after another,
Are a-dance, like motes, in the sunlit hour ;
But the two arm-chairs stand there as witness,
Though the babes and the sucklings clamber
and crow :
"Tis the nature of all things in their fitness—
They were both of them old, it was time they
should go !"

V.

But *we*—we are young, we have time to linger
By pleasant pathways from Yule to June,
So never heed Time, with his warning finger
And shifting glass, for it is but noon !
So pipe and sing to a blithesome tune,

Though it be as the song of the wandering singer,
Who loiters awhile, but who does not stay ;
Or the fatal vow of the faithless lover,
Who loves, and kisses, and rides away ;
Or the notes of the nightingale trilling in May,
Or the chirp of the grasshopper hid in the clover,
That wists not when they will mow the hay,
Nor knows when the nightingale's singing is
over.

VI.

Yet were it well that these should know ?
A sorry world if all were wise—
If all life's finger-posts were plain,
And all the blind could find their eyes
To see that Wisdom's self is vain !
Nay, let the hour unchallenged go,
For wisdom cometh unaware,
When, coy at first, as violet hidden,
Or guest, unto the feast unbidden,
Death's messenger, the silver hair,
Glistens alike in brown and gold.
Alas, my friend, are the sands so low ?
Alas, my love, it is even so ! . . .
And can it be that *we* too are old ?

VII.

Yea, sit we down in the old folks' chair,
And watch we the little ones crow and clamber ;
We have woven yew-garlands for sunny hair,
And put out the lights in the bridal chamber ;
And hand in hand, and with dimming eyes
Wait we, and watch in the dusk together,
O love, my love of the summer weather,
Heart of my heart, who wert once so fair !
No more of toiling, no more of spinning,
No more heart-beatings, no more surprise ;
For the end is foreseen from the first be-
ginning,
The castle is fall'n ere its turrets rise—
Ah, love, my love, it is sad to be wise !

VIII.

But Time, our master, stands wing'd and hoary,
And seeming to smile as he whets his blade ;
Whilst Love is whisp'ring the same old story,
And Hope seems shrinking and half afraid ;
For of these the measure of youth is made,

And the measure of pleasure, the measure of glory
Which is meted out to a human lot,
And so on to the end (and the end draws nearer),
When our souls may be freer, our senses clearer
(’Tis an old world creed which is nigh forgot),
When the eyes of the sleepers may waken in
wonder,
And the hearts may be join’d that were riven
asunder,
And Time and Love shall be merged—in
what?

AFTERWARDS.

I KNOW that these poor rags of womanhood,—
This oaten pipe, whereon the wild winds play'd,
Making sad music,—tatter'd and outfray'd,
Cast off, play'd out,—can hold no more of good,
Of love, or song, or sense of sun and shade.

What homely neighbours elbow me (hard by
'Neath the black yews) I know I shall not know,
Nor take account of changing winds that blow,
Shifting the golden arrow, set on high
On the grey spire, nor mark who come and go.

Yet would I lie in some familiar place,
Nor share my rest with uncongenial dead,—
Somewhere, maybe, where friendly feet will
tread,—
As if from out some little chink of space,
Mine eyes might see them tripping overhead.

And though too sweet to deck a sepulchre
Seem twinkling daisy-buds, and meadow grass ;
And so, would more than serve me, lest they pass
Who fain would know what woman rested there,
What her demeanour, or her story was,—

For these I would that on a sculptured stone
(Fenced round with ironwork to keep secure),
Should sleep a form with folded palms demure,
In aspect like the dreamer that was gone,
With these words carved, "*I hoped, but was not
sure.*"

1889

VOL. II.

C

THE SCARAB.

(DEDICATION.)

You brought me once, from a distant land,

A sacred scarab, 'graven o'er

With mystic characters,—It bore

(You said, and turn'd it in your hand,)

A chapter from the Book of Death,

That oldest of all books,—which saith :

“Oh, my heart, that camest to me from my
mother !

My heart that camest to me at my birth,—

That throbb'd within me whilst I dwelt on Earth

And took my pastime amongst living men ;—

Rise not up against me now, and as a foe

Before Osiris the changeless, and those other

Divinest Rulers of the plaited beard,

For pow'r of sceptre praised and fear'd,—

Bear witness against one that was thy brother

When thou and I, together, used to go

And take our pastime amongst living men !”

And then you told how,—where the Nile winds
thro'

Its fertile fields to dunes of shifting sand,—
And where the ev'ning light makes blue
The low hills of the Libyan land,
There,—hidden in the mountain's core,—
Approach'd by labyrinthian ways,—
Vast chambers,—where the dead once more
Were seen of men,—their walls upraise—

The flickering torch's fitful flame
Illuminates the haunted shade,—
The lotus-budded colonnade
Of blended stalks,—the sculptured name
Set forth, in hieroglyphic sign,
Beneath the pictured vulture-wings,
Where once,—sole monarchs of the mine,
Reposed those old Egyptian Kings.

So long ago,—So long ago,
They lived, and breathed, and held their
sway,
We scarcely seem to know, to-day,
If they were gods or men !

And that last Queen,—who, erst, unstrung
And drank off the pearl to her Roman
lover,—
They were so old when she was young,
Maybe she hardly could discover
Their names and stories then !

Yet is it given to us to know
And read their lineaments ;—to see
The fringed lid,—the beetling brow,
The air of majesty.
The deft embalmer's subtle skill
Hath baulk'd the worm, and turn'd the grave
Into these regal halls, where still
From pedestal to architrave
The dead men's glorious deeds survive ! . . .
Here their triumphant chariots drive
To certain victory, and crush
The vanquish'd 'neath their wheels, — whilst
hither
Still doth the swarthy Ethiop bring,
On bended knee, his offering,
The tribute of the " Land of Cush "
In ivory, gold, and ostrich-feather.

Here feast they,—as they did of old,
Exalted on their thrones of State,—
The cup-bearers, with cups of gold,
The fan-bearers, and minstrels wait
To serve them as they sit at meat ;—
Hard by, the light-foot damsels stand,—
All starry-eyed, and fair of face,—
The hawk-head god is close at hand,
The symbol of their Royal race,
The lotus blossoms at their feet ;

But all is silence ! . . . Countless years have roll'd
Since their last shout of battle died away,
Still'd is the clashing of their arms for aye,
Voiceless the singers,—mute the harps of gold ! . . .

Thus the departed rulers of the land
Reposed in noiseless solitude, and slept
Untroubled,—save when the lithe serpent crept
At parched Midsummer, o'er the whispering sand,
To take his rest among the Kingly throng,
Or when,—at sunset,—from the fretted roof
The great bats flutter'd ;—but no sounds of Earth
Heaving in travail, or in transient mirth
Disturb'd their rest,—no creak of strain'd *shadbof*
Nor burial wail, nor boatman's evening song.

And here it was that, in the hollow breast
Of a dead Pharaoh,—seal'd to pulseless calm,
In bitumen and aromatic balm,
My scarabæus had his hidden nest
And waited patiently the promised end.
It was his sacred privilege to plead
With the high Gods for the offending heart
That once had beat there, and thus play the
part
Of Mediator in its hour of need,
Standing the dead man's advocate and friend.

For, ah, what smould'ring passions may have
lain
Beneath this scarab, or in loosen'd fires
Burst forth to waste and ravage! . . . Wild
desires,
With pride of State, and lust of conquer'd
gain! . . .
For these he might have pleaded,—not in vain,
But, as it chanced,—from the barbaric North
In some remote, iconoclastic, age,
The spoiler came, who (with his Embassy
All unachieved,) dragged the poor scarab forth
Into a world where all his gods were slain.

Oh hapless scarab, that in days gone by
Wert wont to lie
In those high halls of ancient sepulture
Nestling, secure,
In the still'd chamber of a monarch's breast,
By his supreme behest
Accredited to gods that haunt no more
Old Nile's degenerate shore,
Since the invading desecrator came
With sword and flame,
The ravisher of tombs,—and changed thy fate,
How art thou fallen from thine high estate !

I take thee,—unresisting,—in my hand ;—
A lumpish thing, wrought out of sea-grey stone,—
Conventional ;—no beetle that on land
Or sea, or river, ever yet was known !
Thou mightest be a tortoise,—by thy size,—
Thy wings are scored like the eternal hills ;—
Thou seem'st to me superlatively wise
And old, and staid, and numb to earthly ills !

Yet, as becomes an Envoy of great Kings
To greater gods,—a consequential air
Seems to possess thee, as thy fluted wings
Fold down above the mummied Pharaohs' pray'r.

How art thou fallen from thine high estate
 "Alas, poor scarab!" I exclaim once more,—
 Sold into bondage on this Wintry shore,
Serving in exile as a paper-weight!

But what, mayhap, he wist not, when he came
To do this penal service, and in shame,
 Humiliation, and dissembled wrath,
To perch upon, and press, from dawn to dark,
The written scroll,—wherein each crabbed mark
Was fraught with mystery;—she that did possess
And mould him to her will,—his task-mistress,—
 Was a disciple of the learnèd Thoth
The god of Letters. In the solitude
Of her barbaric chamber,—ere she wooed
 The stuff'd and bloated head-rest of the North,*
 She from her pointed greygoose-quill, pour'd forth
At that lone midnight hour, an inky wave
 Of inspiration on the virgin page,
Whereon she used to set her scarab slave,
 Then seek her couch. As, thus, his vassalage
Thro' days and nights continued,—(being wise
 With wisdom of the Ages, and discreet

* The ancient Egyptians reposed upon a wooden rest or head-stool.

Even beyond his years,) the mysteries

Wherewith his new existence seem'd replete
Stood forth reveal'd, and when he took his seat
Upon the summit of his paper throne,—
(So she believes who claims him as her own,)

He could mark, learn, and inwardly digest
Each garner'd thought, and, haply, recognise
Some of those passions that, in Pharaoh's breast
His mission 'twas to plead for ;—Wild desires
Smould'ring unstified, with intent to prize
The gift before the Giver, and his due
Wrest from the Lord of All,—with loosen'd fires
Of envy,—hatred,—vain imaginings
And vainer loves ! Those old things, ever new,
That have survived all Egypt's gods and
Kings !

“Oh, my heart, that camest to me from my
mother !” . . .

My erring human heart, that, as a foe
May rise against me ! If the scarab's pray'r
Savours too much of gods we have outgrown,
To soar aloft through that sublimer air
Which separates us from the Eternal Throne,
May it, at least, prove pure enough to go
And plead for me on Earth with Man, my brother !

So, when to you,—the truest and the best
Of all surviving friends,—I dedicate
The wand'ring fancies that were lately press'd
By this,—your gift,—grown up into a book
For your acceptance ;—that your eyes may
look
With more indulgence on the thoughts express'd
So faultily,—my sacred paper-weight
I set upon the cover,—like a crest,
With its pathetic pray'r inviolate.

LIFE'S AFTERNOON.

I sit at rest, and in Life's Afternoon,
Look back in pitying wonder, at its dawn
And fierce meridian heat,—whilst all too soon
The ev'ning shadows lengthen on the lawn,
And ere yon pink glow leaves the Western sky
To-day is number'd with the days gone by.

How did I strive and struggle in the sun,
In the hot noontide of those ardent years! . . .
What rash encounters, then, were lost and won
Wherein my heart's blood mingled with my
tears! . . .

Tears that are dried,—blood that has ceased to flow,
Few are the shafts could strike to wound me now!

All things have changed of late ;—I know the gold
For what it is, and fling aside the dross,—
Few are the treasures that I care to hold,
And fewer those whereof I mourn the loss,—
I can forgive and pity, tho' I look
In a false face and read it like a book.

Ah, me ! for time and strength to make amends

For all that ardour, anger,—fond belief ! . . .

To reap the meed of scorning paltry ends,

To glean in Wisdom's fields and bind the sheaf,

Nor feel afraid that I may be bereft

Of e'en this doubtful daylight that is left !

Methinks I know the life that I should choose

To live again, could I but have a voice

In mine own destiny, nor would I use

The boon so lightly as to rue my choice,

Since all the errors I could ne'er forget

Should seem like danger-signals ready set.

I would not be a rover, and so waste

In small-change moments, such a golden prize

But husbanding the seasons without haste

Would leave myself full leisure to grow wise,—

And, knowing how delusive all things prove,

I would not strive or envy,—hate or love.

For, in the rays of that enlighten'd day

Mine eyes should see things truly as they are,—

The golden idol, with the feet of clay,

The glow-worm that I took to be a star,—

Nor would I bow at any earthly shrine

Since God, and God alone, should be divine.

I would remember that the desert sands

Efface their traces that have pass'd before,
And that the freshest footprint only stands

Till newer whirlwinds shall have swept it o'er,
So, with the victor's crown,—the poet's bays,
New heroes rise,—new minstrels sing new lays.

And, were I prone to envy rosier blush,
Or brighter glance, or sunnier locks, than mine,
I would remember Beauty is no bush

Set up to tempt the traveller to good wine ;—
That jewell'd cup bath oft held poison'd draught
Beguiling unto death the lips that quaffed.

Yet would I dwell by pleasant, leafy ways,
Where Nature's aspect should, at least, beam fair,
Where peaceful nights should follow pensive days
Purged of all passion and exempt from care,—
My pleasures simple,—my requirements few,
My part,—to *ponder*,—rather than *to do*.

A garden and a sundial,—but its face
Should be with blinding clematis o'errun,
So that the eye no envious line should trace
To warn of when the tranquil day was done,—
And sloping lawns, and tinkling silver brooks,
One chosen friend, perhaps, and favourite books. . . .

Ah voice of Wisdom, vainer than the fool's !

Dull, joyless, echo of a vanish'd tune !

Who would not give the frosts of fifty Yules

For one brief season warm'd with Love and
June !

Said I my heart was dead ? . . . I spake untrue ;—

Ah, Love ! it lives, and beats, and beats for you !

What soul could soar once human hopes were
brought

To this low level of contemptuous scorn ?

What cruse of oil would feed the Lamp of
Thought,

What frolic fancies animate the morn ? . . .

How would such passionless perfection rise

Above the bigot's pictured Paradise ? . . .

The fruits of Wisdom make a mawkish feast

Since sweet and bitter are our nature's due ;—

Come back,—young lover ! to my lonely breast

And tho' I know you false, I'll dream you
true !

Hail dear delusions ! welcome hopes and fears !

Come storm and sunshine, fraught with smiles and
tears !

I sit at rest and Autumn-time is here ! . . .

Her first red leaf lies quivering at my feet,—
“At rest,”—not yet at peace! Oh, hurrying
year!

Oh, Youth, and Summer, that were once so
sweet,
Ere I renounce you,—with your joys and woes,—
I must await the numbing Winter snows!

A few swift days,—scarce time to close the door
Against the blast, or draw the easy chair
Towards the glowing hearth, and Winter hoar
Will chill our blood, and sweep our branches
bare,
And even thus the Winter of our days
Shall numb our senses and obscure our gaze.

But *now*? . . . Has all the sun-glow left the
skies? . . .

Is ev'ry songster silent in the grove? . . .
Despite the dreary warnings of the wise,
May I not sing of Summer-time and Love?
“Surely,”—(soft voices whisper in my ear),
“Both will return to you again next year?”

Delusive whispers ! . . . Ah, perfidious time
In which each varied season hath a part,—
When Winter's frosts are withering our prime
Whilst Summer sunsets flicker in the heart,—
When Age's Wisdom links with Youth's Desire
And placid brow belies a breast of fire !

How shall a minstrel wake the trembling lyre
And sing of Love, in Autumn-time, and live ? . . .
Yet cold the verse that lacks the sacred fire
Which Hope, and Youth, and Love, alone can
give !
I strike the lyre ; the answering echoes ring :—
Say, oh, my Friend ! is it too late to sing ? . . .

Nay ! for in serer Autumns have I seen
Some slim brown bird start up upon a spray
And warble as tho' all the world were green
And chill October blossoming like May,—
Yet droops the rose, and howso' sweet the song
Nor bird nor minstrel may rejoice for long !

CONTRASTS.

A SONG OF THE WIND.

"A venturesome fellow is the Wind : creeping thro' the keyholes and crannies of a house, he must wot of strange contrasts."

WITH their heads on the self-same pillow
A bride and a bridegroom kiss'd,
But the Wind is a venturesome fellow
Who sings : "I can roam where I list :—

"I can creep,—I can crouch,—I can clamber,"
And he whispers, now, soft, overhead,
"Stretch'd out in the very next chamber
Lies a corpse all alone on the bed."

TWO PICTURES.

I. LOVERS IN A GARDEN.

II. A WIDOW KNITTING BY AN EMPTY CRADLE.

I.

A MAIDEN, in a garden, dreaming

Of fairy-prince and halcyon days ;

Her head, with sunny tresses gleaming,

Bow'd down beneath dim trellis'd ways ;

A row of sunflow'rs by a paling,

A wicket left upon the latch,

A summer-house, with woodbine trailing,

And ivy creeping o'er the thatch.

A footfall on the garden gravel,

A quick'ning heart, a whisper'd word ;

A youth, burnt brown with foreign travel,

Come back to claim a hope deferr'd.

(O happy, happy time of Love's beginning,

Ere ever we can guess that storms are near

Sunlight glancing, buds unfolding, thrushes singing,

Golden Summer of the soul and of the year !)

II.

A garret in a city byway,
A pale sad woman all alone ;
A weary wand'rer on Life's highway,
Poor and forsaken and unknown.

What need to knit the little stocking,
Or strive again for daily bread ?
Why set an empty cradle rocking ?
The nestling has for ever fled !

"Yes, both are gone ; perchance 'tis better !"
She sighs at length. "'Tis better so !"
Then bends to read a tatter'd letter,
Or turns to watch the falling snow.

(Ah, bitter, bitter time of Sorrow's waking,
Ere ever we can dream that hope is near !
Snow is falling, flow'rs are fading, hearts are
breaking,
Weary Winter of the soul and of the year !)

VICTORIA.

21ST JUNE 1887.

QUEEN of so many nations that the sun
Sets not upon the boundaries of thy sway,—
Whom men of varied clime and creed obey,—
Mother of many Princes,—wife of one
Who,—now these fleet-foot fifty years are run
Whereof the festival is held to-day,—
Sees not thy golden tresses turn'd to grey,
But,—in eternal slumber, slumbers on ;—
How many glorious images unite
'Round thine illustrious name !—The Dragon's
head
Beneath St. George's heel :—the Lion's might :—
Britannia :—India's Empress,—robed in red,
Crown'd and enthroned !—Then lo ! thou com'st
in sight,—
A lonely woman,—sable garmented.

LINES
UPON A STATUETTE REPRESENTING
LOVE AND DEATH.

TIME was, mine eyes were pleased with this
conceit ;—

A little god in bronze,—with gilded wings,—
His dart already poised, and, at his feet,
A grinning skull, o'errun with creeping things.

And, strewn around, trite emblem and curl'd
scroll,—

Telling of transient joy and fleeting breath,
Time's hour-glass lying by the festive bowl,
Love's empty quiver by the scythe of Death.

Ah, whilst the bowl was crown'd,—the quiver full,
Love's fingers feeling for the fateful shaft,—
Careless of gleaming scythe, or grinning skull,
Along the "primrose path" we kiss'd and
quaff'd !

Oh, for one draught from that enchanted spring ! . . .

One honest wound from that uplifted dart !

Oh, for some new,—some unexpected thing,
Wise tho' we be,—to make us fools at heart !

We want not Wisdom now ; we grow too wise—

Smite us, dear Love ! we'll glory in the scar !

Yea, press thy bandage closer to our eyes,
So that we know things not for what they are !

Why hearken, now, to such an oft-told tale ? . . .

In the calm twilight of our Autumn days

Were it not best that pious hands should veil
All sombre symbols from our sadden'd gaze ?

So that we see but *half* this grim conceit ;—

A little god in bronze, with gilded wings,—

His dart all ready poised, but, at his feet,
Nor hour-glass, scythe, nor skull with creeping
things !

THE MER-BABY.

(SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE BY MISS DOROTHY TENNANT.*)

THEY wander'd forth,—link'd hand in hand,
To watch their father's speeding sail,
When lo ! they saw it on the sand,
A mer-baby, with folded tail,—

A mer-baby,—all pale and dead,—
Left stranded by the ebbing tides,—
With sea-weeds wreathed about its head,
And silver fins upon its sides.

They strove by many an artless wile
To wake it up and make it play,—
The wan sea-baby would not smile,—
All cold and motionless it lay.

Its eyes were closed as tho' in sleep,
Its fingers clasp'd as tho' in pray'r,—
The little land-babes could but weep
To see it lying lonely there !

* Now Mrs. H. M. Stanley.

Then out and spake the elder one,—

(His eyes as azure as the wave,)

“We will not leave it here alone,

But make for it a pretty grave

“Near where our little sisters sleep,

Hard by the hedge where violets grow,

Where mother often goes to weep

And mind her children in a row.”

They took it to their mother dear,—

She loved not mer-folk over well,

For she had heard those tales of fear

The deep-sea fishers have to tell;

And well she knew that bleaching skulls

Lie hidden in the changeful main,

’Neath where the syren lures and lulls

The mariner with dulcet strain;—

This, ay, and more, the mother knew,—

Yet, when she saw a thing so fair

With folded tail,—all silver-blue,

And fingers clasp’d as tho’ in pray’r,—

She made for it a pretty bed,—
All velvet-soft with gather'd moss,
And set a sea-shell at its head
Because she dared not set a cross,—

Near where her little daughters slept,
Hard by the hedge where violets grow,—
Where, often times, she went, and wept
To see their green graves in a row.

And, "Heaven grant, my babes," said she,
"If father sinks beneath the wave,
The fish-tail'd people of the sea
May make for him as soft a grave."

THE LAMENT OF A WHITE ROSE.

I GREW beside a garden seat,
Where happy children laugh'd and play'd,
And tender lovers—dreaming—stray'd,
Whilst all my budding breast was sweet ;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

Anon, the children's mirth was o'er,
The tender lovers clung and wept ;
Within the house a mother slept
Her last long sleep, to wake no more ;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

They came and cull'd a fun'ral wreath,
They pluck'd the white, they spared the red,
They flung me on a straiten'd bed
On her cold breast who lay in death.
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

They mourn'd and sigh'd in bow'r and hall,
The children cried, the lovers clung ;
A great bell toll'd with solemn tongue,
The coffin-lid leant by the wall ;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

They lifted up the coffin-lid,
Strange footsteps echo'd on the stair,
Her children came to see her there,
And kiss her ere her face was hid ;
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

They wept in hall, they wept in bow'r,
Their tears fell o'er me as they kiss'd her,
But the red rose weeps for her own pale sister
Buried alive 'neath the grey church tow'r.
(Oh, why was I only a poor white rose !)

A CHANCE LIKENESS.

SOMETIMES it happens,—in Life's Afternoon,
We see a passing face like one we knew
At Youth's beginning, when each pulse beat high
With hope and joy in living. From the crowd,—
The careless crowd,—that might not understand
That a lost love can light a living face,—
How do we long to welcome such a one,—
To call him to our side, to clasp his hand,
And greet him as a friend ! . . With yearning eyes
We seek his own, expectant of the smile
Of recognition . . . Ah ! . he knows us not ! . . .
The sacred symbols,—like a hollow mask
Portraying one we loved, are set to-day
Upon a stranger's brow ! . . The lips are mute,—
The eyes perceive us not,—no kindly word
Falls to our share,—with hunger in our gaze
We see the phantom fade, and stand forlorn,
A sad survivor ! . . God, and our own hearts
Know all we miss on earth ! . .

CLARA.

(AGED SEVENTEEN.)

WATCHING the summer swallows flit and pass,
My Clara,—grown a lissome nut-brown maid,
Stands dreaming 'midst the daisied meadow-grass
In her own youth and innocence array'd ;—

She cares not for the city's noise and glare,—
A country girl, in pleasant places bred,—
Fenced round from outward harm by tender care,
Peace in her heart and sunshine o'er her head.

Yet, sometimes,—as I watch her standing thus,
I ask myself, half-sadly : Where is she,—
That other Clara,—who was once with us,—
Whose head could scarcely reach above my
knee? . . .

I seek her in the shady orchard walk,—
I miss her pattering footsteps on the floor,—
Yet hear the echo of her baby-talk,
And read her height upon the nursery door.

No curly head comes to the window-sill
As once,—responsive to my loving call,—
Tho' there the painted bars are fasten'd still
That saved the pretty nestling from a fall ;—

But, thro' them, somehow,—little Clara fled,—
And, every day, I mark, with new surprise,
The stately maiden, sent me in her stead
With pensive mien and earnest waiting eyes,—

A woman grown, and nursing in her breast
Haply,—a thousand fond imaginings,—
Her wings all ready plumed to leave the nest,
Her fancy eager to outstrip her wings.

So do the changing Seasons glide away
Under the calm unalterable stars,—
And e'en to *me*, it seems but yesterday
When *I*, too, look'd at Life thro' nursery-bars !

HAZELY HEATH.

'Tis "chill October," yet the linnet sings,—
Still are our brows with balmy breezes fann'd ;—
No Winter makes a desert of this land
Of my adoption, where each season brings
To charm the sense,—new guerdon of good things,
And Autumn only spreads with tender hand
A richer mantle o'er the billowy sand,
Golden and purple,—braver than a King's.
Here all is light and song, with odorous breath
Of briar and pine,—whilst ever, early and late,
The yellow gorse,—like "kissing-time," or Death,
Abides with us. It were a worthier fate
To crawl,—methinks,—a worm,—on Hazely Heath,
Than strut,—a peacock,—at a Palace gate !

SOUVENIR.

(WRITTEN IN A BOOK.)

I SEE the spot, in fancy, where we read

 This book together, 'neath a Southern sky ;—

A mighty chestnut towers overhead

 And shades us from the sun,—beneath us lie

Fair fields, and flowering meads, and orchards trim,

 And then, the little town, where, here and there,
Seeming no bigger than the flies that skim

 Yon tinkling Alpine stream, by Inn and Square,
Flit men and women,—strangers, and unknown

 To you and me, who, from our Northern Isle
Like two stray skiffs, by shifting tempests blown,

 Have reach'd this quiet haven, where the smile
Of Nature greets us, and the skies are fair

 And hopeful as my heart! . . . Thro' branch
 and bine

Of trailing clematis, the fragrant air

 Comes laden with soft sound and sweetest scent,

Thrilling the trembling fox-glove and young vine

 As with a sigh of pleasure and content

VOL. II.

E

Such as I feel at last ! . . . Here, as we rest
On the fell'd trunk of some such giant tree
As that which shades us, in my grateful breast
What dreams arise of sweet tranquillity,—
Of Home,—of Love ! . . A life when every day
Might be as this one, when the happy night
Would join instead of parting, and the way
To surer rest, should seem so swift a flight
Our souls might make this comfort of sad hearts
Their only haunting terror ! . . Then, you read
From this same book, wherein, it seem'd, in
parts,—
(Spoken by that dear voice which, were I dead
Methinks would wake me,)—thoughts that had
been mine
An unknown poet sang ;—of true-love crown'd,—
Of grief for true-love's loss ;—of Life's decline
To peaceful Autumn, when green leaves are
brown'd
And brown locks silver'd ;—And, the while you read
You held my hand, and leagues of land and sea
Seem'd spread between me and each anxious dread,
Whilst all the world seem'd fair,—since you,—
to me,
Were all the world ! . . .

AN EGOTIST'S CREED.

Lost in a maze of idle thought
This world to me so perfect seems,—
So bright and light with glancing beams
And pleasant pastures, flower-fraught,
'Tis as the heaven of my dreams ;—

And if my feet could always stroll
Along the sweet familiar ways,
I would not change this earthly phase
Of Life and Love, for all the soul
May gain in promised lands of praise.

In vain, for me, the preacher raves,
Exulting in his narrow creed,—
The sinner's doom,—the good man's meed,—
In yon grey pile amongst the graves
I lend no ear, and take no heed ;—

For, can the Giver of all good,
To further some prepost'rous plan,
Have made, in enmity to man,
So fair a world,—in wrathful mood
Turning a blessing to a ban?

Nay, tho' I know that millions pine,
And see the maim'd, the halt, the blind,—
The pallid forms that sweat and grind
And toil at furnace, mill, and mine,
Yet will I deem Him just and kind.

“Ay, ‘just and kind’! Ay, ‘kind and just’!”
(Harsh mocking voices seem to say),
“To thrust us forth,—to our dismay
The brood of drunkenness and lust,
Where all, save we, keep holiday!

“For us no shade of summer trees,
No sight of daisy-spangled sward,—
We, the accursèd of the Lord,
Must toil for you who sit at ease,
Disease and Death our sole reward!

"Can our crush'd hearts ascend in pray'r,—
Our woeful accents hymn the praise
Of that stern Pow'r that smites and slays
His creatures, when too weak to bear
Their burden of disast'rous days?

"And dread ye not,—who sit and weave
Sweet, idle fancies, at your will,
Who grasp the good, and spurn the ill,—
That sky may fall, or earth upheave,
Or some swift bolt avenge us still?" . . .

These voices somewhat mar my rest, . . .
Well, well! We know not what is plann'd! . . .
Some must be wretched in the land,—
All things are order'd for the best,
And more, we may not understand!

So, whilst,—for *me*,—the world is bright,
Whilst skies are blue, and fields are fair,
Need I the ills of others share?
My gladness gives them no delight,
Shall I lament for their despair?

AN EQUINOCTIAL GALE.

TO-NIGHT the winds of Heav'n are all unbound
And sweep, with angry breath, the Autumn glade,
And as I, waking,—listen to the sound,
My spirit falters, and I feel afraid.

Knowing how small a planet is our World,—
Poised, like a bubble, in Eternal Space,
One well might wonder that it is not hurl'd
This ev'ning, from its old appointed place ;

But, as the little emmet, that has borne
Some fancied treasure to his fairy hill,
Fears not for cities wreck'd, or forests torn,
So he can cling to what he toil'd for still ;—

So, since this battling of the winds began,
My heart has sought thee on the raging main,
Tho', in the mighty universal plan,
My pearl is even as the emmet's grain !

ON CHRISTMAS-EVE.

ON Christmas-eve—(How long ago?
I muse, yet cannot count the score)—
She, shrouded in her mantle, so—
(It must be twenty years or more)—
Went weeping through yon curtain'd door,
Into the softly falling snow.

She had said mad unmeaning things ;
Had knelt to me, and clasp'd my knees ;
Call'd up the ghosts of vanish'd springs,
And kisses under summer trees,
Deeming the memory of these
Would hinder Love's unfetter'd wings.

She spoke of fealty giv'n in vain,
Of pledge and promise writ on sand,
Of past delights and present pain,
With more I did not understand ;
Then drew my ring from off her hand,
And thrust it back on me again.

That ring (my lady wears it now)
She used to call her wedding-ring,—
A crown, with heart-shaped pearl below
(*My heart*, she said, poor little thing!)
What profits it remembering?
It is but foolishness, I know.

She cursed me, kneeling at my feet
(Not that such curses aught avail!);
Then, changing swift from sad to sweet,
She kiss'd me through her tear-stain'd veil;
Then rose, prophetic and pale,
And, e'er she sought the silent street,
"If the dead ever rise," she said,—
"The dead that did not wait to die,—
Then, maybe, after you are wed
To one more fortunate than I,
On some such ev'ning, by and by,
You'll see me standing by your bed."

The deerhound crouching at my side
Whined low, and seem'd to understand;
All movement in the street had died,
I knew the snow lay soft as sand;
I saw the clock, with straighten'd hand
Like index-finger raised to chide.

Half after twelve! And, as to-night,
I sat here, dozing all alone,
I woke to start at something white,
That whisper'd in an undertone,
Whilst all around a glory shone—
(It must have been some trick of light).

There seem'd a sound of surging tide,
A voice as from a wat'ry grave;
And then, a figure like a bride,
With tresses floating on the wave,
Cried out to me to help and save—
(I wonder how and when she died!).

And then I look'd, and lo! the clock
Stood at the hour, the hands were there,—
Half after twelve! A shiv'ring shock,
A sense of wringing clinging hair,
A flutt'ring footfall on the stair,
And then—Stay! there's my lady's knock.

Her rating wifely tones I hear—
(Her voice is somewhat shrill and high;)
Her trailing silks come rustling near
(No one can dress like Lady Di.)—
Ghosts of the bygone years, good-bye!—
"A merry Christmas to you, dear!"

*WRITTEN IN A VOLUME OF "THE
WORKS OF SHENSTONE,"*

WHICH HAD BELONGED TO LORD BYRON WHEN A
STUDENT AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, AND
IN WHICH THE POET HAD INSCRIBED SOME LAUDA-
TORY REMARKS CONCERNING THE AUTHOR.

"By Poet written, and by Poet read,
A twofold glory shines upon my head ;—
Perish'd the eyes that read,—the hand that wrote,—
Tatter'd and travel-stained my russet coat,—
Yet still I live to Fame !—In living eyes,
To living hands,—a treasure and a prize,—
Lord Byron's book ! . . . Ere yet the accom-
plished days
Had wreathed his forehead with immortal bays,
Whilst the Promethean spark, to Fame unknown,
Smoulder'd beneath an Academic gown,
Byron ! I was thine own !—oft laid to rest,
Rock'd by the throb of thine impetuous breast,
Clasp'd by thy hand,—commended by thy pen
Ere yet thou had'st thy place with gods or men !

"Illustrious Master ! thy brief race is run,—
Whilst chill'd by Winter,—warm'd by Summer
sun,—

The pen that praised me evermore at rest,
I bide with mortals still, a favour'd guest ! . . .
Ah ! had Death claim'd thee 'ere thy genius reign'd,
Fame had been cheated of what Honour gain'd ;—
Silent the voice of thine immortal song,
Silent the carpings of the spiteful throng,—
Untraced pain's record on thine uncrown'd brow,
Unmoved the million hearts that love thee now !—
And I,—this humble thing of prose and rhyme,—
Thy friend and servant of a vanish'd time,
Had been but 'Works of Shenstone,' badly bound,
Nor cost my present mistress twenty pound !'

A FABLE.

DIGGING amongst my turnips, one fine day,
I spied, as I upheaved, a clod of clay,
A lithe red worm—the gard’ner’s special dread—
Coil’d round a promising young turnip-head.
“Ah, noisome reptile, thus thy greed is foil’d!”
I cried, and would have crush’d him as he coil’d,
When, lo! methought, this worm of aspect meek
Turn’d, and tho’ counted speechless, seem’d to
 speak ;—
“Forbear, rash fool!” (it proudly said) “nor deem
My tastes as vegetarian as they seem,
But, . . . *I am blind!* . . . and groping here,
 to-day,
A large round object barr’d me in my way,—
’Twas but thy turnip! not the thing I sought,—
The Seat of Fancy, and the Throne of Thought!
Enjoy it whilst thou may’st, in upper air,
Whilst *I*, in darkness, seek for daintier fare.
Patience, in time, shall sure fruition bring :—
My grandfather once feasted on a king!”

SONG.

"I WONDER WILL YOU TWINE FOR ME," &c.

"Dark tree ! still sad when others' grief is fled,—
The only constant mourner o'er the dead !"

—BYRON.

I WONDER,—will you twine for me
Sad cypress wreaths when I am dead,
Or, sentinel,—like yon dark tree,
Watch, constant, o'er my lonely bed ?

Or will you,—like some forest bird
Escaped the slumb'ring fowler's snare,
Plume your free'd wings, and heavenward
Soar blithely thro' the ambient air ? . . .

Methinks at both my heart would bleed,—
My spirit-heart, 'neath folded wings,—
If our poor sexless souls shall heed
The passing of terrestrial things !

So, choose, my love, some middle way ;—
At morn,—like falcon fresh and free
Soar sunwards,—but, at closing day
Be, sometimes, like the cypress tree ;—

Mute o'er a memory remain
In centred thought, one little minute,—
Unclasp one closed-up book again,
And read the story written in it !

SNOW AT CHRISTMAS.

SNOWFLAKES on laden bough and whiten'd ledge ;

Poor Robin Redbreast chirping for his crumbs ;

Imprison'd waters under drooping sedge ;

Sad children, carolling in cold that numbs

And hangs the icicles upon the spray,

Paling green fields, and making skies as dun

And veil'd as Destiny ! . . . Thus Christmas
comes

Girt with the well-worn symbols, whilst away
From off the far horizon's utmost edge

His semblance fades, before a rising sun,
Who turn'd the season to a holiday !

"SHE WILL NOT WAKE!"

I.

"If it should chance, upon some future day,
You hear them say
Haply, that I am lain asleep in death,
Close to my breath
(Coming so quietly that none may know)
Lay your lips so . . .
Kiss and conjure me, thus, . . . till I awake,
And men shall marvel that they call'd me
dead,
Seeing me lean toward you from my bed.
This for my sake!"
Thus spake my love, and kiss'd me as she
spake.

II.

My love spake thus to me in midwinter;
I, chiding her,

Talk'd of long summer days, blossoms on bough,
Sunlight aglow,
Woods wide awake with echo of sweet song,
And all day long

Very delight at living life so fair,
And, straining her towards me in my arms,
Strove with light words to silence her alarms,
Smooth'd her soft hair,
And blamed her thoughts, seeing so sad they
were.

III.

But, well-a-day ! the winter overpass'd,
Spring came at last,
Flow'rs under foot and birds upon the boughs ;—
From out the house
Her women came, with haggard looks, and said,
"Your love is dead !

Strewn round with garden-lilies all as fair,
Come and behold her where she lies asleep."
Then I, too sick in spirit e'en to weep
For my despair,
Pass'd up into the house and saw her there.

IV.

Crown'd with just such a wreath as one I made
When, 'neath the shade,
We sat in summer-time breast high in fern,
Beside the burn,
With all life seeming moulded to our will—
So cold, so still,
I had not even kiss'd her out of fear ;
Yet, for acquittal of my promise' sake,
And for her own, that she would straightway
wake,
I then and there
Bent down my falt'ring lips to kiss my dear.

V.

"Ah, wake to me !" I cried, "my love, my life !
More than my wife !
Dearer than waking love of living man !"
And I began
(Bearing in memory her fond request)
From her cold breast
To thrust aside white lilies and green yew

Kissing and calling her—"Awake, awake!

Awake, my darling, for your promise' sake,
Made whilst your lips were warm!" 'Twas
then I knew

Her words untrue:

Kiss howsoe'er I might, she would not wake.

She will not wake—ah me, she will not wake!

A MAY MEETING.

THE same gold gorse, and the same brown heather,
And the same shrill note of the plover's cry,
And the same curl'd cloud like an angel's feather,
Afloat in the midst of an amber sky,

And away to the westward, the same sun setting,
Midst the cloudland castles that nobody owns,—
And the same little stream that goes foaming,
fretting,
To seaward, over the self-same stones,

And the same old mansion, its casements burning
Aglow with the sun's last lingering rays,
And over the fir-tree top, at the turning,
The first bright star of those last bright days !

* * * * *

Curly brown locks and golden tresses,
A youth and a maiden fair to see,
With whispering words and stol'n caresses,
And the hope in their hearts of a bliss to be.

* * * * *

The nightingale hush'd, May turned to December,
Locks and tresses alike grown gray,—
One to forget and one to remember,
And each to travel a different way.

* * * * *

Then, the same gold gorse and the same brown
heather,
And the same little streamlet bound for the sea ;
And the two that have met and talk'd together ;
Alas for the changes in you and me !

THE GUEST-CHAMBER.

WITH bated breath, and falt'ring feet, I tread
The threshold of this room, and ever so
Must enter it ! The cheerful fire-light glow
Falls softly on the rosy-curtain'd bed
Made ready for the guest ;—the table spread
With snowy muslin, and with flow'rs that blow
And, e'en in this chill month, their fragrance
shed,—
And all seems bright, to those who do not know !
But I am looking,—with mine inward eyes,—
Upon another sight ;—the self-same room
Shrouded and darken'd, and a form that lies
Straighthen'd upon the bed,—the seal of doom
For ever on her lips ;—I hear low sighs
And smell sweet blossoms destined for a tomb.

THE RETURN OF THE BELOVED.

HE is under this roof to-night,—he is home,—he
is safe,—he is well !

So the eyes that were watching may slumber,—
the listening ears be at rest,

All my soul seems to rise and rejoice to the chime
of a marriage bell,

And the heart that was turn'd to a stone, is as
blithe as a bird in my breast !

How oft,—when the storm-cloud has darken'd,—
the tempest beat loud at the pane,

Have I said to my faltering heart, “Is it well
with my love on his way? . . .

Is he braving the fury of waves, or the withering
suns of the plain,

Or the treacherous tongues that deceive, or the
eyes that may lead him astray?”

And so,—as the days dragg'd along, was I torn
and tormented with doubt,—

Whilst a pall lay all over the land, and the sun
seem'd obscured in the sky,
Forlorn and distress'd and unquiet,—by daylight I
wander'd about,

Forlorn and distress'd and unquiet,—I watch'd
the long nights go by ;—

Afraid to feel careless of spirit, or fill up my life to
the brim

With the laughter that drowns all thought, or
the labour that leads to repose,
Lest the moments that lighten'd my pain might be
fraught with misfortune for him,—

“I can bear with the Winter,” (I said), “if the
sun will but shine at its close.”

But now,—he is home, he is here ! . . . I thank
God he is safe, he is well !

Now the slowest of clocks will seem fast,—now
the darkest of days will seem fine,
My heart blithe as a bird in my breast,—all my
soul like a marriage bell,

He is under this roof to-night, he is safe,—he is
well,—he is mine !

FALSE OR TRUE?

THE woman I loved has been gone a year—
 (A year from my lips, a year from my breast !)—
I saw her lie cold on her flow'r-strewn bier
 Ere they bore her away to her lonely rest.

I had loved her as never man loved before,
 Or promised maiden, or plighted wife :
I have mourn'd for her loss upon sea and shore,
 And known, without her, a death in life.

I have miss'd her letters, her pray'rs, her tears,
 Her sighs, her laughter, her chiding tone,
Her foolish fancies, her idle fears,
 And her love that seem'd all my own !

I have sought for her spirit by day and night—
 (Oh, for a look, for a touch, for a breath,
For a whisper'd word from my soul's delight
 To bring me life from the realms of Death !)

Thus have I lived for a whole long year,
But my comrades have never known aught of
this,
And one has just whisper'd a word in my ear,
A word to give comfort, nor take amiss ;

“You are well, my friend, you are gay,” he said ;
“I am glad at heart that they told me true ;
I had fear'd you were mourning for one who is
dead,
And who should have been nothing to you.”

And then he told me of how he knew—
And of how he would prove to me, by and by,
That the one I had loved so well was untrue,
That her life had been all a lie.

And I? I answer'd him never a word—
I utter'd no cry, nor of rage or pain,
But stood blankly staring, and meekly heard—
In an hour he will come again.

He will bring me proofs, in black and white,
Written words in a well-feign'd hand,
But I shall know how to read aright—
I shall profit and understand !

(Cold she lay on her flow'r-strewn bier,
Cold, and quiet, and draped in white,
With her hair comb'd carefully back from her
ear)—
Is he wrong, I wonder, or right?

Here have I sat since he said his say—
(A year? A day? How long ago?)—
So her lips could lie, and her eyes betray? . . .
In an hour I shall read and know!

. . . Yet the lips in this pictured face look true,
And the eyes gaze so tenderly back into mine!
The lips are so red, and the eyes so blue,
But mute, they can give no sign!

Speak, lips that are silent! Speak, questioning
eyes!

Come back, light step, to the echoing stair!
I have call'd to her thus till she seem'd to rise
And stand in the doorway, there;

And sometimes she comes as an angel Queen,
Wing'd with silver and crown'd with light,
With calm pure eyes, and a serious mien,
In garments of dazzling white.

And sometimes she comes as so oft of yore,
Cloak'd, and veil'd, and quietly dress'd,
And flies to my arms ere I close the door—
It is thus that I love her best !

Will she come to-night in her cloak and veil,
Or with angel-lustre around her brow ?
Will she cling to my knees as a penitent pale ?
No matter ! I know her now !

I know her now, that woman who died,
With her pleading voice and her earnest gaze—
Her false blue eyes, and her lips that lied,
And her treacherous, winning ways ! . . .

Yet the lips in her pictured face look true . . .
Sweetest of lips that are seal'd and set !
Tenderest eyes, that are closed to view—
Shall my mind mistrust you, my soul forget ?

Cold she lay on her flow'r-strewn bier—
I could not question, nor she reply ;
And now, when her heart has been still but a
year,
Shall I harden my own for a lie ?

Nay, Love of my life ! it shall never be said
When our innermost thoughts stand forth
 reveal'd,
That,—trusting you living,—I doubted you dead
When your lips were silent and seal'd !

If it was as he says, and I never knew,
Will knowing it now bring me better cheer? . . .
One heart, at least, shall beat loyal and true ;—
He may speak, but I will not hear !

IN MEMORIAM.

WE are survivors ; from the echoing street
One more familiar footstep dies away
Into eternal silence. Day by day
Some eye that brighten'd, some brave heart that
beat,
Is closed and still'd. Alas ! those hurrying feet,
Where are they fled, bearing the bright array
Of Wisdom, Beauty, Youth ? And where are
they
Whose living love made life and leisure sweet ?
I cannot deem they are departed quite—
Transfigured, changed, and vanish'd from our
eyes—
But living to us still, though lost to sight,
And surely sharing still our smiles and sighs !
A self-made creed, begot of memories,
Yet, if I err, whose voice shall set me right ?

A HOMELESS LOVE.

POOR Love is driven out,
Even with scourge and knout,—
What evil has he wrought to deserve so rude a
waking? . . .

He is exiled from the bow'rs
Where he pass'd such blissful hours,
And underneath his batter'd wings his little heart
is breaking!

In what cold lonely bed
Is he to rest his head? . . .
What orphanage or almshouse will take him in its
keeping? . . .

Ah, Love has had his day,
So he must go his way;—
He weeps, but none are sorry for his weeping!

Play'd he not well his part?
Was not his tender heart

Ever faithful and brave, alike in days of joy or
sorrow?

In what was he remiss?

Gave he not kiss for kiss?

What fault of his has brought about this miserable
morrow?

So he had bed and board,
Nor guerdon nor reward
Claim'd he—as of a right, who was not arrogant or
grasping,
Accounting himself rich
If, in some hidden niche,
His heart might only beat against the treasure he
was clasping.

In such a narrow space
Could he take up his place,—
A spider's fairy web, or else a curl'd-up leaf in
summer,—
There would he lodge, and lie
Beneath a cloudless sky,
Unexpectant of rebuff from either comrade or new-
comer.

For, if a step drew near
He would prick his watchful ear,
And then nestle snug and close and give forth no
sign or greeting,
Holding his eager breath
He would feign to lie in death,
Tho' underneath his folded wings his little heart
was beating !

But dismal days have come
And he has now no home,
His very cobweb lodging is or ruin'd or bespoken,
The leaf wherein he curl'd
Is spread open to the world,
And underneath his bleeding wings his little heart
is broken !
In what cold lonely bed
Is he to rest his head ?
What orphanage or almshouse will take him in its
keeping ?
Ah, Love has had his day,
So he must go his way,
He weeps, but none are sorry for his weeping !

SIX SONNETS.

I.

CONCENTRATION.

MINE has not been the lot of those who find
By warm firesides the light of friendly smile,
Nor can the stolèd priest in fretted aisle
Soothe with his specious salves my stubborn mind ;
I strain not after gold with those who grind
The mill of daily toil, nor care to while
The absent hour with pleasures that beguile,
Since home, creed, wealth, and world, in one
combined.
See then, my friend, how great has been my gain,—
How kind sweet destiny, how wise my choice !
How have I cause to triumph and rejoice
Whilst all I treasure my two arms contain !
Tho', should one heart grow cold, and mute one
voice,
My soul must languish in perpetual pain !

II.

LOVE'S VANITY.

IT is for you, dear love, I dress, and don
Soft raiment, lace, and jewels of red gold,
To shine in your eyes only, and to hold
At the sword's point what was so dearly won.—
And so, and not for self's sake,—I put on
These pomps and vanities, which you behold
But scarcely mark ! Ah, vain and manifold
Are Love's poor wiles, yet none are new,—not one !
For ladies ev'n as I,—long, long ago,
In some such eyes as yours to merit grace,
Twined chains of shining gold, and pearls in row,
And deck'd themselves in jewels and fine lace,
Above whose bones, to-day, rank burdocks grow,
Whilst cold winds sigh around their resting
place !

III.

UNCERTAINTY.

DOUBT not the wisdom of the just Decree
Which saith, "Ye shall not know : ye shall not
raise
The veil that shrouds the dawning of new days
And new misfortunes !" Who could live, yet see
The loved one's vacant place ? or watch him, free,—
Turning to tread, with cold averted gaze,
The paths that lead from old familiar ways,
And all the cruel changes that may be ? . . .
Nothing I know, and nothing understand,—
Nor would I lift the veil, and yet, altho'
Your days may prove the longest in the land,
Still,—since I neither understand nor know,
And cannot read the lines in this dear hand,
I hold it fast,—afraid to let it go !

IV.

THE SLAVE TURNED TYRANT.

SHOULD you despise her for that, born to sway
She serves instead ; at your beloved feet
Meek and obedient, that she takes her seat,
And,—as you frown or smile,—is grave or gay :
A word,—a look,—can darken all her day
Or make night glorious ; but, as thus you mete,
Conscious of might,—alternate bitter and sweet,
Careless of what you do, or what you say,—
Think, Master mine ! not thus, in by-gone days
Dared your hand smite her, or your accents
check
The love you craved for ! Hers has been the
fault
Who raised her slave to sit above the salt,
And so, she may not chide, but only prays
For mercy,—with your heel upon her neck.

V.

THE VOW.

You swore, and by my life, that you were true ;
And still I let you swear,—nor with a kiss
Hush'd those dear accents, lest they might
dismiss
My body to its bed beneath the yew !
Green fields are fair, and summer skies are blue,
Yet,—so I find you false,—what profits this ?
How sigh in solitude for vanish'd bliss,
Or know another dawn that knows not you ?
So, if your words were words, and nothing more,
Spoken in jest, or said to satisfy
The hunger of my heart,—if so you swore,
And so, swore falsely, it were best to die
Could your words kill ! Then, say them o'er and
o'er
Nor let me live to languish if you lie !

VI.

THE VOW BROKEN.

AH, wanton words ! Ah, sweetest lips forsworn !
Ah, lightly spoken,—lightly broken, vow,
Whose inspiration was the vehement glow
Of Love's brief summer, when the rose is born !
We are grown wise enough to laugh to scorn
Youth's rash asseverations ;—we, who know
How coldly crawls the stream 'neath frost and
snow
That leapt so lightly on an April morn !
See,—still I sojourn midst the haunts of men
Despite your perfidy ! Suns rise and set
To warm a world that seems as fair as when
We gazed on it together, and yet—and yet,—
I know not, even now, without regret
If I can smile at what I wept for then !

MEMORIES.

WRITTEN ON AN ANNIVERSARY.

We should remember ;—years roll on apace,
But as the headlong Alpine torrent brings
Down to the hoary mountain's shadowy base
The drift and wreck of rare and far-off things,—

An eagle's plume, maybe ; a crystal gem
That lurk'd, of old,—beneath eternal snows
On virgin peaks ;—or else some sever'd stem
Of "*edelweis*" or cluster'd Alpine rose ;—

So, in our alter'd lives,—constrain'd to take
Their tamer course along the level ways,
Some floating memory may serve to wake
The slum'bring consciousness of vanish'd days.

To-day, such tribute Life's calm'd river brings
From stormier heights ; a crystal bright and rare ;
A feather from an eagle's wide-spread wings,—
A flow'r that blossom'd once in purer air !

A WISH.

I WOULD there were a post-office,
 However far away,—
And whatsoever the postage was
 That I might have to pay,
For a letter to reach my dear dead love
 Upon some future day !

I would write it with my own heart's blood,
 And sprinkle it with tears,
And tell him what my life had miss'd
 Thro' all these weary years,
If my mute appeal could penetrate
 The music of the spheres !

I would send him a flow'r in this letter of mine,
 And tell him where it grew,
And whose were the hands that had planted it
 there
 In the Churchyard,—under the yew ;—
And a lock of the hair that he used to praise,
 And a kiss, I would send him too !

He would find that the flow'r was faded and
dead,

That the bright brown hair was grey ;—
But the kiss that was his in the days of yore
Would keep tender and true for aye ;—
Ah, me ! if an answer could only come back
Whatever there was to pay !

THE BEST AND THE WORST.

THAT is not always best which seems the best ;—
The hoped-for thing, the thing expected long ;
The rarer song
Of songster bred in the remotest nest ;—
The fruit that hangs aloft at greatest height ;—
The pastime plann'd out for our own delight ;—
This is not always best.

That is not always worst which seems the worst ;—
The joy denied ; the hope condemn'd to fade ;
The blossom laid
Low by the storm which our fond hands have nurst
And tended lovingly ;—the world foregone
To solace those who suffer all alone ;—
This is not always worst.

This is the best,—which may not seem the best
 Till man's true mission shall be understood ;
 To seek the Good
 Tho' Evil follow on it ;—to be blest
 In blessing others ;—to esteem as naught
 The sacrifice of self in deed and thought ;—
 This always is the best.

This is the worst, which needs must seem the
 worst ;
 To doubt God's goodness ; find a friend unjust,
 Or feel our trust
 Rest on a broken reed ; to know the first
 Of our heart's idols of all honour shorn ;
 To see ourself turn'd to a thing we scorn ;—
 This surely is the worst !

1890-2.

" Entre les ouvertures de paix qui furent faites pendant la trêve, on proposa de marier le Prince d'Espagne, Dom Carlos, fils unique de Philippe et de Marie de Portugal sa première femme, avec Madame Elizabeth fille aînée de France aussi-tôt qu'il fut proposé, elle conçut beaucoup d'estime pour l'époux qu'on lui destinoit . . . Le Prince d'Espagne n'étoit pas moins content de sa destinée . . . il s'abandonna avec plaisir à tout ce que cette idée lui inspiroit d'amoureux. . . . Cependant les affaires changèrent de face par la rupture de la trêve. . . . Il est aisé de juger quelle fut la douleur de Dom Carlos . . . et quelle fut sa joie quand on reprit la négociation de la paix : cependant cette paix qui flatoit si doucement ses espérances, fut ce qui le ruina pour toujours. Pendant le tems que la négociation dura, Philippe II. devint veuf par la mort de Marie Reine d'Angleterre sa seconde femme ; comme il avoit dessein de se remarier, il fit demander pour lui la Princesse qu'on lui avoit accordée pour son fils : On auroit mieux aimé la donner à l'héritier de la Couronne qui étoit de même âge qu'elle, qu'à un Prince qui pouvoit être son père, et dont elle n'auroit que des Cadets, mai son ne put honnêtement le refuser."—(*Œuvres de M. l'Abbé de Saint Réal* (M.DCC.XXIV.) t. iii. p. 63-5.

If we are to believe the contents of a Spanish Document purporting to have been written by Fray Juan de Avila (said to be the confessor of Don Carlos, and an eye-witness of what he describes), which was discovered in the archives at Simancas by the late Herr Gustave Bergenroth, and made public in 1870 (*Gustave Bergenroth, a Memorial Sketch*, by W. C. Cartwright, M.P.), the mystery which has hitherto shrouded the fate of this unhappy son of Philip II. can be accounted a mystery no longer. According to this authority, Don Carlos was privately executed by having his throat cut, by his father's orders, upon the night of Feb. 23, 1568, for complicity in the rebellion of the Prince of Orange and Counts Egmont and Horn in the Low Countries, after he had been previously imprisoned, tried for high treason, and subjected to the interrogatory of the Inquisition, accompanied by torture, the King having said, "that the judges should employ all lawful means of discovering the truth, just as though the accused were a common subject of low condition" (*Gustave Bergenroth*, p. 198). Letters of a somewhat compromising nature which, it is stated, had passed between the Prince and the Queen his stepmother, are said to have added greatly to the King's displeasure. A report was afterwards circulated to the effect that Don Carlos had died of illness in prison, the King not desiring "to make public the shameful conduct of his son, and he added, although he was perfectly justified, 'There were people who would think him hard and sanguinary if they were to know the truth.'" This account differs materially from those of former historians who have agreed upon July 24 as the date of the Prince's death. *Fray Diego de Chaves* is the name given by Monsieur Gachard to the confessor of Don Carlos.—V. F.

THE LAST WORDS OF DON CARLOS.

(Spoken to his Confessor, Fray Juan de Avila, Feb. 23, 1568.)

“YOU say, Fray Juan, I must die to-night,
 The King has sign'd the warrant. Be it so,
 Strange though such tidings be ! I would not go
 Through future days in this disastrous plight,
 Nor these most miserable nights renew
 For all the wealth the Indies or Peru
 Could freight our galleons with. Each night I said
 ‘Would God that it were morn !’ and when the
 sun
 Show'd, by his first faint beam the day begun,
 ‘Would God that it were eve !’ Alive yet dead,¹
 Betray'd, despoil'd of all, discredited
 And doom'd to death ! Thus far am I undone !
 Bear with me, holy father, for a space,
 A few short moments, for I would retrace
 My piteous story, since we are alone.

¹ “Il principe di Spagna . . . è talmente dimenticato da ognuno che pare veramente che non sia mai stato al mondo.”
 —Despatch of Florentine Ambassador to Cosmo de' Medici,
 March 30, 1568.

"Alone at last ! and yet with all this load
 Of sins and sorrows ! Kindly Heaven grants
 One of my pray'rs at least ; those sycophants,
 Lerma, Ruy Gomez, Borja,—who abode
 Here in my chamber, watching night and day
 My ev'ry action,—have been call'd away
 To do their final service two hours since ;
 To see that all is order'd, test the blade,
 Make fast the doors and have the sawdust
 laid
 Ready to drink the life-blood of their Prince ;
 For this they left me. Think not that I wince
 To know their errand ! Rather I rejoice
 Exceedingly, impatient for relief ;
 So, since my time for converse here is brief,
 Hear me, good father, whilst I have a voice.

"I am the only son of one who held
 The world in awe, yet am I not *her* son,—
 My sweet Señora. . . Thus was it begun
 This love,—this hatred,—never to be quell'd ;
 The great King Philip who hath earn'd my
 hate,
 Taking my gentle mother for a mate,

Begat me in the hey-day of his prime,
Before Ambition kill'd poor Love with cold,
So am I proud and headstrong, though I hold
Nothing so good as Love. My mother's clime
(My mother who departed ere her time,)
Lent its volcanic fires to warm my blood
To deeds of chivalry and high emprise,
Yet so that in some lovely lady's eyes
I fail'd to win approval, naught seem'd good.

"So did the days go by that led to these . . .
Though when King Philip, seeking wider
 sway,
Turned his keen glance to those chill Isles
 that lay
Wrapp'd in grey mists, amongst the Northern
 seas ;—
Where dwelt a lady, kindred of his line,
Mary the Queen,—(daughter of Katherine,
His father's cousin :) as God hears me now
In His high place,—I swear that no ill-will
Bore I the King for this! Nay, more, until
His English wife had pass'd away, I vow
I mused much on the brother I might know
VOL. II. H

And greet and love one day, were he to reign
 And turn those islands of the stormy sea
 Into a second home, if I should be
 His brother-king upon the Throne of Spain.

“Let me consider if that poor Queen’s death
 Seem’d fraught with ominous presage to my
 heart?

Nay, what King Philip took in such good part
 Was it for me to seem to groan beneath? . .

But for the mourning weeds wherewith I
 clothed

Myself from courtesy, mine own betrothed,
 My pearl of France, possessing all my soul,
 Turn’d my mind rather to my bridal cheer
 Than to that loveless lady’s lonely bier. . . .

Nay, but Fray Juan, you shall hear the whole,
 As God shall hear me! . . . When my father
 stole

And made the bride that was *my* bride, his
 own,—

How had you felt, if, haply, you had been
 A man not vow’d to God, or, unforeseen,
 Surprised a heart beneath your monkish
 gown?

"I will not ask you. . . I, that am no priest
But unregenerate man, have come to know
The rancorous emotions that may grow
Out of a heart thus trampled ! No wild beast
Defrauded of its prey, no mother torn
From her one babe, no wanderer forlorn
In arid deserts, in their bitterest hour
E'er felt more mad,—more hopeless. . . Ev'ry
day
To see her face,—to be condemn'd to stay
And watch King Philip wearing my white
flower ;—
To call her 'Queen,' and 'Mother,' whom no
power
Might turn to wife of mine ! . . . What had I
done,
Good father, to the great God over-head
That, not in nether hell, but here, instead,
It thus should please Him to torment His son ?

"Some say she shudder'd seeing his grey hairs,—
And that he chid her, taking it amiss ;
(Mark you, 'twas not the Queen who told me
this,
I chanced upon the story unawares :)

I have avow'd to you mine own intent,
 But swear again the Queen is innocent ;—
 Go, tell my father :—shield her blameless head,
 Tell him his witnesses all swore to lies ;
 That all the letters were base forgeries
 Invented by the foes who wish me dead,—
 So soon to be contented ! . . . I have said
 Who heads the list,— what power clothed in
 might
 And majesty,—would have me cease to live
 For private ends : the guilty ne'er forgive,—
 And so it happens that I die to-night.

“ This ‘ mutiny ’ in Flanders. . . Is it rare,—
 A thing unheard of,—that to test his skill,—
 Redress abuses,—call it what you will,—
 A stripling, well-nigh driven to despair
 By passion, insult, anger,—should desire
 Some wider scope for the consuming fire
 That burns within his bosom ? . . . I confess
 I thirsted for adventure ;—that through me
 The disaffected Flemings might be free
 To live like loyal subjects ;—none the less
 Did I desire the growth and happiness
 Of this wide Realm. Who taxes me with more ?

Alva,—ambitious of supreme command,—
Gil Anton,¹ justly chasten'd by my hand,
And all the perjured crew that falsely swore !

“ Say to the Queen, my lady,—if she heard
I was ‘tormented,’—like some common knave
(*I* that am Prince of Spain !) that, not to save
My body’s bitter anguish,—by one word
Shed I the faintest shadow on her fame ;
Nay,—rather say that nothing I could name
Of words that she hath breathed or actions done,
Had prejudiced the King.—To me, so soon
Left desolate,—did she vouchsafe the boon
Of motherly regard.—I seem’d her son
And so she let the tender phrases run
Knowing her pure affection undefiled
And fearing no man’s malice,—for my sin
(The sin she had no part or parcel in,)
Chiding me even as a wayward child.

“ See, on this book of Hours, (my lady’s gift,)
How the triumphant lion chased in gold,—
The rampant lion of Léon,—seems to hold
The helpless lily of France, as though to lift

¹ One of his pages who swore facts to his disadvantage.

And toss it like a plaything, ere his grip
 Closes to crush it! . . . Pray God that it slip
 Betwixt his claws, before those ravenous
 And cruel jaws can rend it! . . . As I pray
 My mind goes forward past the imminent day
 (Seeing her Royal blazon figured thus,)

When this wild heart, that Love made mutinous,
 Shall cease to beat ;—then is my soul oppress'd
 With fears for her ; not Christ or all His
 saints
 Can drive them hence ;—my faith in Heaven
 faints
 And demons come between me and my rest.

“Yet must I turn to God, and seek relief
 Where such fears have no place, since I that
 stand
 Before you now, am by a father's hand
 Condemn'd to die ere morning! . . . Time is
 brief,
 The King hath sign'd the warrant, and to-
 night,
 Wrapp'd in a placid consciousness of right,
 He, even *he*, is praying for my soul! . . .

Something rings false in this ;—some error
nurst

Of man's fall'n nature ;—thus to smite me first
And then implore a Higher Power to enrol
My name amongst the saved ! . . . Mind you,
the whole

Of those ten thousand masses go to aid
The Royal pray'rs ; one thousand ducats'
worth

This year ;—then yearly, till the end of earth,
One thousand, at one hundred ducats paid.

"I marvel much how men will deem I died . . .
By fever, plague, or witchcraft ? . . . At what
tale

Of filial disobedience Kings will quail
Considering their heirs ? . . . For he will hide
The ghastly truth, and that which here to-night
Is done in darkness, must not meet the light
To-morrow, or for ever ! . . . It were well
To feign me mad, maybe, and mine own hand
Mine own destroyer. Folks would understand,
Look solemn,—shake their heads, and haply tell
The tale so often told, of how I fell

At Alcala, and on the narrow stair
 Left half my wits, and how the surgeon's
 knife
 Scoop'd out the rest—whence my rebellious
 life
 And shameful death—and bid their sons
 beware.

"You know I would be buried in the robe
 Of the Franciscan order, with the hood
 Of a Dominican,¹—if the King thinks good ;—
 This garb might suit his purpose. Who would
 probe
 Beneath such saintly covering, to seek
 Upon the throat the little tell-tale streak
 Conceal'd from all men's prying? . . I would lie
 In fair Toledo—at the convent there,—
San Juan de los Reyes,—'neath a square
 Of plain Tortosa jasper ; tapers high
 Should burn on festa days there, but the eye

¹ " . . un habillement de franciscain et un capuce de dominicain, dans lesquels il désirait être enseveli, comme il le fut." (See *Don Carlos et Philippe II.* par M. Gachard, p. 473, and Letters of the Archbishop of Rossano, papal nuncio, of July 27 and 28, 1568, and Letter of Leonardo di Nobili of July 30, for Italian account.)

Must light upon no pompous blazonings,
Carved catafalque, or broider'd baldaquin,
Set up to glorify the clay within
In sinful arrogance of earthly things.

“And now farewell, good father ; nay, one word—
A word of warning.—Keep you,—guard you
well ;
You wot of much it were unwise to tell
(For even priests have tongues,) and I have heard
That monarchs, when their servants come to
learn
Their secret dealings, have been known to turn
Their favours from them. . . So you sleep secure,
I charge you,—for your profit,—get you hence
Out of Madrid,—inventing some pretence
Of pilgrimage to foreign shrine,—the cure
Of some old ill,—to serve for coverture.
They say a dying man has clearer sight
Than one whose eyes are dazzled with the
glare
Of this world's glory ;—wherefore, have a
care
For these my words,—seeing I die to-night.

"Pray for the guilty soul which I commend
 To God's great goodness! . . All who love
 me best
 Pray for me now! . . Is this some sorry jest
 To break my spirit, or indeed the end?
 Thus have I question'd,—doubting. Yet you
 say
 The King hath sign'd my death-warrant to-
 day,
 A King not giv'n to jesting. . . All is done
 Over and ended with me;—he hath pour'd
 Out all the vials of his wrath. . . Oh, Lord,
 Be thou more merciful! . . . His only son! . . .
 Son of the first wife of his youth,—the one
 They said he loved so well! . . . Help me to
 live
 Through these last bitter moments! . . .
 Stay, I hear
 Their footsteps on the stair. . The end is
 near;—
 Yes; you can tell the King that I forgive." . . .

"FIN DE SIECLE."

THE world is old ; old in expression of thought,
Old in persistency to dare and do ;
Old in endeavour to revive anew
The dead grey ashes that are burnt to naught
By fangs of fiercest flame gnaw'd through and
through.

To us, who breathe this breath of latter days,
Can anything seem true, or fresh, or keen,
Whilst mocking voices whisper thus, between
Our smiles and tears, "Ye tread in dead men's
ways ;
That must wax weaker which hath always been" ?

The starved oppressors of a vanish'd race
Cry out for sustenance, and seek their prey
In hearts worn thin and callous, since To-day
Passion and Impulse flag, whilst in their place,
Reason inaugurates her colder sway.

"How can I thrive," asks Love, "on such poor
fare?"

These know me not, my welcome is out-stay'd."

Pain, likewise, maketh murmur, all dismay'd:—

"Where is my part in love, my tribute, where,
In days gone by so generously paid?"

Thus, pale and ravening, shall these two feed

On hearts born out of time ; a fated few

Predestined, for their sorrow, to renew

The fervid sense of some old Pagan creed

Which may not perish, whether false or true.

THE OLD ROCKING HORSE.

(IN THE LUMBER-ROOM.)

HE stands in the desolate chamber,
 Snorting and pricking his ears,
With the dauntless glance
And the spirited prance
 That we knew in the bygone years ;

For full thirty summers and winters,
 From the dawn to the close of the day,
Has he dwelt in this room,
With never a groom,
 Or ever a feed of hay.

The roof is so dingy with cobwebs,
 The window so coated with grime,
That he only knows
By the caws of the crows
 The morn from the evening-time.

The mice, in their frolicsome revels,
Sport over him night and day,
And the burrowing moth
In his saddle-cloth
Has never been flick'd away ;

It is seldom his desolate dwelling
Ever echoes to human tread,
And its carpetless floor
Is all litter'd o'er
With the relics of days long dead.

What a medley of eloquent lumber
Do his proud eyes lighten upon,
From those drums and flutes
To the high snow boots
And the mouldering stuff'd wild swan ;

And the ruinous magic-lantern,
And the bottomless butterfly net,
And the cage for the doves,
And the prize-fighter's gloves,
And the rickety old spinnet !

He must know, this spirited charger,
As he snorts and pricks up his ears,
Why my heart is in pain
As I toy with his mane
And my eyes are half blind with tears ;

He must know who slept in that old swing cot,
And who sat in that tiny chair,
And who flew the great kite
That ghostly and white
Leans up in the corner there ;

And the bats, and the balls, and the ninepins,
And the boat with the batter'd prow,
Ah, that charger tall
Knows who play'd with them all,
And how sound some are sleeping now !

Yet, for all this burden of knowledge,
His bearing is proud and high,
With the dauntless glance
And the spirited prance
That we knew in the days gone by ;

And in spite of his lonely confinement,
His muscles are firmly strung,
For the passing of Time,
That has wither'd our prime
Has left him still fresh and young.

He wears saddle, and stirrups, and snaffle,
And frontlet of faded blue,
And a bridle rein
On his flowing mane,
And a tail that fits on with a screw.

Alas, for the sorrows and changes
Since, mounting this dappled grey,
With whip in hand
To some fairy land
I was speedily borne away!

On, on, to those unknown regions
Where all are so fair and kind! . . .
And away and away
Goes the gallant grey,
And we leave the world behind!

How his stout green rockers are creaking !

How his long tail feathers and streams ! . . .

How his whole frame thrills

With "the pace that kills"

As we hie to the land of dreams !

Of those times, so good to remember,

Few vestiges now remain,

Yet here, to-day,

Stands my gallant grey,

With saddle and bridle-rein ;

And I think, as I stroke him sadly,

"For awhile, how sweet it would be

If the women and men,

Who were children then,

Could be all as unchanged as he !"

FIRST LOVE.

OH, happy fresh awakening
To first-felt-love,—a new-born thing,—
So new, we murmur “What is this,
This strange, sweet shyness, stealing o’er
Soul, sense, and frame, from brow to lips,—
From falt’ring feet to finger tips,—
This kiss, that does not seem a kiss
Like any we have known before?”
New days may dawn, new blossoms blow,—
New changing loves may come and go,
Or loves that linger and try to stay,—
Loves braver and truer than youth’s fleet dream,
But none that can ever so wonderful seem
As that fickle first love that flutter’d away,
With those first heart-bounds at a sweet surprise,
And those first upliftings of tender eyes,
And those hopes and tremors in secret nurst !—

It was good,—it is gone,—but it still was good ;—

Tho' I would not beckon it back to me,—no !

I would not beckon it back if I could,

For I think it seem'd good but because it was

first,

And I know I could love more nobly now.

BY THE SEA.

SHE watch'd the silvery moonlight fling
Its spell o'er Ocean's ebb and flow,
And, feeling such a feeble thing,
Wonder'd that she should love him so.

He likewise look'd on moon and star,
And saw the white waves lash the shore,
And, feeling strong to make or mar,
Wonder'd he could not love her more.

AN "OLD, OLD STORY."

"LET me die with this ring on my finger, then
fold my hands, so, on my bosom,
I had never the heart to pawn it, tho' it wasn't
a wedding ring ;
I have said how I came by it now : Last year,
when the broom was in blossom,
Down by the low-lying lands where the very
first nightingales sing,
When the lilacs were thick on the bough, but ere
ever the hawthorn was over,
When the evening shadows grew long, and the
river seemed all in a glow,
Whilst the grasshopper chirped under foot and the
moths were afloat in the clover,
Down by the low-lying lands—there is no use
denying it now !

Ah! if ever your sweetheart, your Will, had said
anything half so tender,

Had he pleaded thus night after night, and
press'd you thus day after day—

But, no! I may do you a wrong; you might never
have made surrender,

So, sister, forgive me my words, you might
always have said him nay!

But then, we were never alike, no more than the
rose and the bramble,

You were always so sweet and sedate, whilst I
was accounted so wild,

Ever ripe for a romp in the hay, or awake for a
moonlight ramble,

And with never a fear of aught since the day
that I grew from a child.

And Will—I mean not to offend, for you know it
as well as another—

Had courted me nigh two years, had been
trying to make me tame;

Will, who seem'd like a schoolmaster then—your
husband since, and my brother—

Had ask'd me to share his home, and had ask'd
me to bear his name.

So a good man cared for me once ; surely this is
a thought I may cling to,
He took me for honest and true, tho' a trifle
light-hearted and wild,
A pupil to preach to and teach, or a playmate to
fondle and sing to,
Having no more notion of guile than might
lurk in the heart of a child.

But my heart was away at the Hall, with its
tapestry hangings and armour,
With its banner that waved from the tow'r over-
looking the half of the Shire ;
I had drunk of the poison'd cup and bent low to
the voice of the charmer,
To the tempter that came to me clothed in the
form of our brave young Squire.
"What is Willy, in spite of his worth?" I said to
myself, in my blindness,
As I look'd at his gamekeeper's coat, and toss'd
up my head in my pride ;
Tho' I knew, for the matter of that, that for
honesty, wisdom, and kindness,
He'd have beaten the very best husband that
breathed in the country side.

As I look from this hospital window, it all seems
so long pass'd over,
And more like a dream than a truth that I never
may look on him more,
That my bed must be under the turf, with only
the worm for a lover,
I'm glad, though I cried so at first, that the baby
has gone before,
For I mayn't feel so lonesome and lost in the great,
grand heavenly palace ;
And mother may welcome me, too, that was
taken a year last June ;
She will wonder at seeing *me*, her mad little
venturesome Alice ;
And I shan't like to tell her, at first, how I come
to be there so soon !

Why should Love, that God set in our hearts, that
was none of our own inventing,
Bring so often a curse to us girls and plant
such a thorn in our breasts ?
Did the robins and ring-doves at home, limp about
broken-wing'd and lamenting,
Just because, when the season came round, they
pair'd off and built themselves nests ?

I know I'm a sinner ; I know I scarce hope to go
quite unforgiven ;

I bow to the dust, in my shame, in the sight of
the Father above,

But I seem to feel, somehow, quite sure, if I'm
counted too wicked for heaven,

That it won't be because when on earth I had
learnt what it was to love !

Let me die with this ring on my finger, then fold
my hands, so, on my bosom,

I had never the heart to pawn it, tho' it wasn't a
wedding ring ;

I have said how I came by it now : Last year,
when the broom was in blossom,

Down by the low-lying lands where the very first
nightingales sing,

When the lilacs were thick on the bough, but ere
ever the hawthorn was over,

When the evening shadows grew long, and the
river seem'd all in a glow,

Whilst the grasshopper chirp'd at our feet and the
moths were afit in the clover,

Down by the low-lying lands—there is no use
denying it now !”

TO THE BIRDS.

(AFTER THE BREAK-UP OF A LONG FROST.)

UNGRATEFUL birds ! that to my frosted pane,
One short week since, importunately flew,
Impell'd by "cupboard" love and greed of gain,
A frozen-out, appealing, pauper crew,

Where are ye fled ? When all your world was white,
And lying spellbound 'neath the breath that
numbs,

What timepiece taught you all to guess aright
The frequently recurring hour of crumbs ?

Nay, did I chance to loiter, tapping bill
Or eager chirrup made your presence known,
As here you perch'd in line upon the sill
Whence you have all unanimously flown !

Pert sparrows, ever foremost at the feast,
And strutting daws were wont to meet my view,
With brave cock-robins, bright of eye and breast,
And all the titmouse tribe, in buff and blue.

The yaffel trick'd out in his parrot-green,
Wearing his bright red cap ; the screeching jay,
The lesser woodpecker, so seldom seen ;
The little linnet, clothed in Quaker gray ;

The greedy speckled thrush, the crested finch
And all his clan ; he of the "golden bill,"
Only last week, disputed ev'ry inch
Upon this now deserted window-sill.

But lo ! a change has come ! All Nature yields,
The raindrops twinkle on the gleaming ledge,
The snow forsakes the furrows of the fields,
The river flows beneath its drooping sedge ;

And now the writhing worm and portly slug,
Unconscious of their coming doom, prepare
To leave their hermit-cells, secure and snug,
And breathe once more the breath of upper air.

So, gobbling sycophants ! your need is o'er ;
And ye who cringed and truckled all day long,
Now that she cannot serve you any more,
Scarce deem your benefactress worth a song !

•

A WIFE'S CONFESSION.

“HEAR me this once, my husband ; you who deem
Me stern and cold,—not loving mine own child,
Our first-born son,—your darling and your heir,
The child you mourn to-day ! . . Hear me this
once,

Nay, do not *hear*, but read these written words
When my sad voice is silent. Learn at last
The story of these miserable years
During the which I did my best to seem
A happy wife and mother ! . . .

. . . You remember

That day of days, just twenty years ago
When, on the terrace-walk, amongst the yews,
You said you loved me ? All the world was still,
Whilst the great sunflow'rs, like a row of ghosts,
Stared out upon us from the garden beds.
I can remember ev'ry word you said
On that too blessèd ev'ning ; how the years
Had glided by, since you, a sailor lad,
The second son of your illustrious house,

And I—a baby girl—your Rector's daughter,
Had play'd together 'neath those very trees
In old departed days, and how, anon,
Ere you had deem'd it possible,—so fast
Tripp'd the light-footed years,—you came and
found

Your playmate grown to woman, and how your
heart

Had yearn'd towards her ! Yet, because you knew
Your life to be so shifting and unstable,
You strove against your love. . . .

. . . And then, you told

The story of your elder brother's death,
And how your father's—following so soon,
Had left you lord of all, and changed your fate.
Then, London and its snares, you spoke of next ;—
The careless, pleasure-seeking, empty life ;—
The making much of little and little of much ;—
Its men and women, wrapp'd in selfish aims,
Envy, doubting, struggling, and for what ? . . .
And how, at first, all this had seem'd to you
The best that life could yield, until, at last,
You long'd for something nobler than this strife
For mere amusement ;—one, at least, to share
Your so-call'd pleasures, and be gladder for them ;—

A human life to bless, a face to beam
And brighten at your coming, and, again,
In loftier moods—a faith, a hope, a home
Which Love should bless ; and how your lady-
mother,
Working upon your mood—had led your mind
To centre upon one who proved unworthy,
And made you deem all women vain and base,
Until, one Sunday, in your village church,
You saw me standing singing in the choir
Dress'd all in white,—for it was summer time,
Before the harvest.

What you thought of me,
Seeing me thus,—my innocence, my faith,
My ignorance of evil,—all was true,
My love, my life ! in those too happy days.
I swear the very semblance of a lie
Had never pass'd my lips ; upon my youth
The watchful and all-seeing eye of God
Seem'd ever looking down, to keep it pure.
Yes ; I was almost worthy, then, of you,
Albeit a humble maiden, set apart
From all temptation. . . . God knows how I
fell
Once the temptation came ! . . .

I like to muse

Now, in my wretchedness, upon that day
When, after church, hard by my mother's grave,
With the great organ pealing down the aisle,
You spoke, and took my hand, and read my heart !
Then follow'd one sweet week of very Heav'n,
Of more than human bliss ! . . . The secret joy
That comes of knowing and yet knowing not,
This joy was mine ; the golden moments flew
As by enchantment ; ev'ry day some pray'r
Seem'd heard and granted, some new hope begot
But to be realised, and then, at last,
Came that blest ev'ning, when the giant yews
Were black against the blushing summer sky,
And Night was near at hand, to fold her wings
Over two happy lovers ! . . .

. . . Was I cold,
Or stern, or obdurate, in those dear days,
As you have call'd me since ? . . . Did not my
heart,
My very soul,—go forth to meet your love ? . . .
And then our wedded days ;—Was I remiss
In any wifely duty ? If I err'd
I knew it not—receiving only praise
For ev'ry action ; nay, then all went well !

Too well,—too smoothly! Am I paying now
In solitude and tears, the penalty
Of having been vouchsafed too much of love,
Too much of happiness? . . .

. . . Your mother came,
That was our first awak'ning from a dream
Of sweet contentment. She was dear to me,
Being your mother; I, to her, less dear,
Being your wife,—the girl who cross'd her plans;
(This knowledge reach'd me slowly!)—I would
cast

No blame on her, nor yet on faithful Alice,
My more than second mother,—once my nurse,
(God grant her soul repose, and give me grace
Only to blame the guilty!) . . . Yet, their sighs
And lamentations, at the childless house,
Made the now growing hunger at my heart
The more insatiate. Thus the days went by.

And now, it seem'd, some transformation swept
Athwart your spirit. You were noble, kind,
And generous as ever, but some link
That bound us in the past, seem'd snap'd and gone.
I know not if another had perceived
What I,—who lived for nothing but your love,—

Perceived so plainly, when, unconsciously,
You said some little word that stabb'd my heart.
You could not be unkind to living soul,
Yet, now, to me, your kindness bore the taint
Of condescension,—seeming, from a height,
To light upon a being all too lowly
To be a second self; whilst, oftentimes,
You spoke regretfully of days gone by
In which I had no share, as tho' you grieved
To know them past and done. Or else, you dwelt
Upon some sudden project for the future
From which my sex debarr'd me; perilous search
In Arctic regions, after shipwreck'd crews;—
The tracking of the tiger to his lair
In Indian jungles;—hurried journeyings
By land and sea,—long absences from home,
Alone, in distant climes; the roving life.
Of your past sailor years resumed once more.
Yet always, when I ask'd you, did you love me?
You answer'd; you had proved it, could I doubt? . . .
But never, now, as in the dear old days,
The precious words we women long to hear
Leapt to your lips unask'd! And once at night,
When you were lying dreaming by my side,
I heard you echo, in sleep, your mother's moan:

VOL. II.

K

"A childless home!" Then, waking up, you said
'Twas strange your race had dwindled to one man
And he unworthy;—lapp'd in aimless ease
And self-indulgence!—One, alas, whose loss
Would scarcely be perceived, were he to go,
And take his place in his appointed niche
Beneath the gray church tow'r! . . .

And all this while,
Early and late, one pray'r was in my soul
And on my lips! Ah, wherefore, Lord of Heaven,
Did I not go on beating out my heart
In pray'r and supplication at Thy feet?
Had I proved patient, all in Thy good time
Thou would'st have lent an ear to my complaint! . . .
Oh, erring human heart, this was thy last
Of innocence and truth! . . . Henceforth, one
dream,
One hope, possess'd me, which some haunting
fiend,—
Some plausible persistent spirit of Hell,—
(Albeit the germ was set in good intent
And clinging tenderness,) did so corrupt
And train amiss, that soon it came to bear
A poison'd fruit!

And now, ten married years,
(Bringing no diminution of my love,
But rather, thro' intensity of passion
And longing unfulfill'd, transforming love
Into a curse and torment,) glided by;—
And still, the childless hearth—the aching void;
Whilst she who once had well-nigh been your wife
Had borne her husband seven stalwart sons,
And round about, in all the cottage homes,
Were piping voices heard, and pattering feet! . . .

Then crouch'd the tempting demon at mine ear
And whisper'd low; "His love is on the wane,
The sure decline! Snatch at the fleeting treasure
Ere it elude thee quite! Seize on the means
Beneath thine hand; set mind and will to work;
Achieve thine end, and earn thy sure reward!"
(Read on, and as you read, knowing me dead,
Forgive and pity! . . .)

You remember how;
From grief at losing you, I scarce could hold
The warm tears back, when you departed hence
For but one little week? Yet, when you went
Your long projected voyage round the world
I did not weep. A *woman* would have mark'd

And wonder'd, fear'd, suspected ! Not so, you,
Being a man, and blind to many things !
Ah, those were days of loneliness indeed,
Yet, was I not alone ; I nursed my hope,
Matured my project ; Alice, faithful Alice,
(Nay, foolish, guilty Alice !) aiding me
With sage advice and counsel. (She is dead ;
God's peace be with her, for she loved me well !)

I do believe I would have sold my soul
For that first letter, after you had read
My joyful news ! . . . You had been months
away,

When, at the very uttermost end of Earth,
You learnt that God had hearken'd to my pray'r,
And then, you wrote ! . . . I, falling on my knees,
Thank'd Heav'n for those sweet words ! . . .

Could I retract,
Go back from my intent, once having read ? . . .
Having re-gain'd your heart, re-made you mine,
Re-captured my lost treasure ? . . . Could I keep
All you bestow'd, yet seem to give you back
No newer gift than mere undying love ? . . .
Twas thus I reason'd. Was I mad, misled,
Or only, wholly wicked ? . . .

When we met,
Ronald—the blue-eyed boy you mourn to-day,
Lay sleeping in my arms. Can I forget
Your silent greeting? . . . Yes; your heart was
mine,
I had reconquer'd it! . . .

My love, my life,
For just the time it takes to read these lines
Try to be me; to see things as I saw
With my poor woman's eyes!

Last night you said,
Looking on Ronald as he lay in death,
These bitter words: "You never loved my boy,
Our eldest born. You ever favoured Frank,
Your second son, as having more of you,
Your face, your disposition! . . . But I swear
Here, by the coffin of my dear dead boy,
That little Frank, for all his winning ways,
Can never conquer in his father's heart
The place that once was Ronald's!"

These, your words,
(Words we had sigh'd together, you and I,
Had things been different!) went to my heart
And stabb'd it like a knife! I did love Ronald
Ere Frank was born! Who was as proud as I

On his first birthday, when the bonfire crown'd
Yon purple hill and lit the lake with flame?
Or who more grateful, when your tenants traced
A likeness to so many of your race
Stamp'd on his baby features? . . . "God is kind
And helping me," (I thought), "He reads the heart;
He heard the bitter cry—the ardent pray'r;
He knew the need; the gracious gift besought;
The gift denied! His ways are not our ways;
Herein is consolation!" And the will,
Helping the erring heart to cloud the brain
And fire the fancy, made that seem the best
Which had its origin in fraud and guile.
We women, by some subtle alchemy,
Turn fiction into fact, dross into gold,
And, when we love, a man into a god!—
What wonder then, this child, so full of life
And strength and beauty, seeming like a link
To bind your heart to mine, should come to be,
For three short years, my darling and my pride? . . .

"For three short years!" and then, my Frank
 was born,
My very own! . . . And God's avenging hand
Descended like a two-edged sword, to smite

My guilty heart, and all was turn'd to tears
And secret bitterness !

. . . You loved not Frank
As you loved Ronald ! . . . 'Twas as tho' the want,
The longing of your life, had been assuaged ;—
Your heart so fill'd, you had no need of him ;
You cared for him with all a father's care,
But ever with a difference, whilst I
Loved him as Ronald never had been loved,
With all a mother's passion for the son
Born after years of longing,—for the child
Of her one love, the husband of her heart !
(Oh, read and pity ! . . .) All these seven years
Since Frank was born, my life has been a Hell
Of torment and remorse ! . . . Ronald, the first,
Ever before my boy ! . . . Why was he tall
And strong, and bold, and daring, and my boy
Thoughtful and gentle, with a dreamer's mind,
A student's nature ? . . . “ Having more of me,”
You said, and said I loved him most for this ;—
Nay ! more of *you* ! . . . Ah, husband, let your
curse
Fall lightly on my head ;—the head of one
So humbled and abased ! . . . No drop of blood
Of yours, of mine, of your illustrious sires,

E'er flow'd in Ronald's veins! The child you
mourn

Was but a pauper foundling; Alice knew
His mother's name, and knew that he should prove
A stalwart, comely lad, but she is dead,—
(Peace to her soul!) Ah, look into your heart,
And understand what brought my own to this,
And read and pardon! . . .

. . . When the tidings came
That both the boys, whilst sailing on the lake,
Had sunk together, and that one was saved
Whilst one had perish'd, in my agony
I pray'd. . . Ah, no! I did not pray for Ronald,
But for our own sweet child! And God has heard
Who would not hear before, and Frank is safe! . . .
But, even as I clasp'd him in my arms,
I saw the look of anguish in your eyes,
And knew that you had pray'd another pray'r,
A pray'r that was not granted! . . .

I too mourn
That brave young life, yet scarce have time for tears;
Let him be laid beside me, I may prove
A better mother to the boy in death!
How could I live on,—knowing that you know,
To meet your scorn, who, having lost your love,

Risk'd Heaven to regain it? . . .

. . . . Fare you well,

Love of my life! 'Tis with a twofold aim
I make my mute confession; to implant
Some germ of consolation in your breast,
(If this were possible), for Ronald's death,
Who was no kith or kin to you or me,—
And next, to plead for Frank;—to ask, for him,
That first place in your heart, till now denied.—
Once it was mine, my love, but I have vanish'd
And pass'd into the everlasting shade,—
The place is empty; these are my last words:
"Give it to Frank, your own, our only child!"

THE DORMOUSE.

(INSCRIBED TO SOPHY.)

LONELY as Adam in his earliest hour,
Or Alexander Selkirk on his isle,
The Dormouse lay, beside a goodly pile
Of nuts and seeds, within his latticed bow'r
All snugly nested round with wool and hay.

He slept his long protracted Winter-sleep,—
A portly sleeper,—sleek, and fat, and full
From Summer feasting, but nor hay nor wool
Nor comfortable coverlid, could keep
His body warm ; 'twas thus the Dormouse lay.

“*The* Dormouse !” . . These two simple words
unfold
His piteous story ! Wrested from his kind
While yet a mouseling, ere his tender mind
Could frame a wish ; whence loneliness and cold ;
He was the only Dormouse in the place !—

A lonely orphan Dormouse, celibate,
And banish'd from the beauteous world of
bough
And bud and blooming spray, and seeming
now
Albeit unconscious of his hapless fate,
Like the survivor of some vanish'd race.

Oh, what a wonderland he does not know
Who has not heard the little rustling things
That fill the forest with their whisperings,
Or watch'd the scarlet foam-fleck'd toadstools grow,
Or 'spied the barr'd blue feather of the jay!

The Dormouse knew not these ; all unreveal'd
Were Nature's choicest secrets, tho' his mind
Knew no regret. Thus "cabin'd, cribb'd,
confined,"

And e'en as one encompass'd and congeal'd
In Winter's cruel thrall, the Dormouse lay.

And oftentimes, at night, with slipper'd feet
The fair Sophia of the golden locks
Would softly rise, and take him from his box;
And listen if his lonely heart still beat,
Her young brow clouded with anxiety ;—

Fearing the very worst, because so cold]
And death-like was his slumber, and his mien
So absolutely placid and serene
And purged of earthly passion. He seem'd roll'd
Into a ball of pulseless apathy.

Thus did his uneventful days go by
Till Christmas came again,—the time of jests
And merry-making. With it came two guests
Of whom one brought a gift, which silently
He slipp'd in Sophy's eager outstretch'd hand.

Oh, gift acceptable and long desired
Yet seeming, on account of last year's frost,
A thing obtainable at too great cost
To be by one of modest means acquired
Thro' all the breadth and compass of the land ! . . .

And still the Dormouse slept, and if a thrill
Pass'd thro' him in a dream, she knew it not
Who, stealing to his dwelling, brought him—
what ? . . .
This precious gift, and left it, lying still
Next to his heart, amongst the wool and hay !

Anon a change came over Nature's face,
And e'en as our first parent woke, of old,
The Dormouse thaw'd and waken'd, and
 behold !
Still all unconscious,—in his limp embrace
A lovely little lady-Dormouse lay !

1891.

A LATTER-DAY MARTYR.

KING WINTER, one Christmas, in Paris,
Reign'd such absolute lord of the town,
That he even clutch'd at the rich man's heart
'Neath his *duvet* of eider-down ;
Whilst the ladies in satins and velvets
Were afraid to go forth in the street,
But sat in their curtain'd boudoirs
With *chaufferettes* under their feet :

So bleak was the look of the winter,
So eager the eyes of the poor,
And so bitter the blast that enter'd
Whenever one open'd the door ;
Whilst the Seine, like a torpid serpent,
Had scarcely the heart to crawl,
And a fog that was almost English
Hung over its quays like a pall.

Yet alone in his comfortless garret,
Thro' many a darkening day,
With not even a pipe to cheer him,
A sculptor had work'd at his clay :
A young man, hungry and haggard,
With cheek-bones pointed and high,
Tho' the flame of a quenchless ardour
Burnt bright in his hollow eye.

"It is finish'd !" at length he murmur'd,
As he flung out his arms and sigh'd ;
"Praise be to the Holy Virgin,
For the daylight has almost died !"
Then he rose to his feet exultant,
And quiver'd with pride as he stood
And look'd on the fruit of his labour
And saw that the fruit was good.

He look'd on the placid forehead,
On the tresses braided and crown'd,
On the bold arch'd curve of the eyelid,
On the cheek that was full and round ;
On the firm cleft chin with its dimple,
'Neath the lips that so proudly curl'd,
On the face that still seem'd to the artist
The fairest in all the world.

Which mistress had proved the kinder,—

This idol of ice and clay,

Or Art, the Heaven-descended? . . .

Both had made of his soul their prey,

And what guerdon remain'd from either

In token of service done,

Of vigour and substance wasted?

One token—and only one ;

This flow'r of the days of his labour,

This star of the nights of his shame,

This proud fair face that, for all its pride,

Should serve as his step to Fame ;—

And she, even *she*, might be flatter'd,

Albeit she loved him not,

When she saw herself crown'd like an empress

Who was only—no matter what !

Then again he exclaim'd, “ It is finish'd ! ”

But, ere ever he went to rest,

He wrapp'd up the bust in the tatter'd coat

That cover'd his shirtless breast ;

As a mother might swathe her infant,

He smoothed it down fold upon fold,

And sigh'd, as he look'd at the image,

“ She was always afraid of the cold ! ”

For so keen was the edge of the winter,
So biting the teeth of its frost,
That he knew, ere the grey of the morning,
His labour might all be lost,
And the name and the fame it might win him
Be nipp'd, ere they came to the bud,
Were the image of clay to be shatter'd
Like the idol of flesh and blood.

But alas for the dreams of the artist,
For the castles he buildeth in vain !
When the cold grey eye of the morning
Peep'd in through the shutterless pane,
It lit on the old coat shrouding
The placid Imperial head—
Whilst, naked and frozen, the sculptor
Lay stark on his squalid bed.

Then his friends of the *Quartier Latin*—
A dissolute, thriftless band—
Came clattering up the rickety stair
To look on the work of his hand,
And each one stood and marvell'd,
With never a word to say,
As he gazed from the corpse of his comrade
To the "swan-song" utter'd in clay

But anon the *sous* and the *centimes*,
From palms that were hard and brown
(For the heart may be large, though the purse
be light),
Grew into the franc and the crown ;
Then the circle of wonderers widened,
And the silver was changed to gold,
And the image was cast in deathless bronze
That had weather'd that night of cold.

And day by day, in the city,
The fame of the statue grew ;
And the woman whose features it flatter'd
Grew famous and wealthy too ;
And the name of the artist was honour'd,
And all men sounded his praise,
But never so loud as to wake him
From his slumber in *Père la Chaise* !

TO A NEW SUNDIAL.

Oh, Sundial, you should not be young,
Or fresh and fair, or spick and span !
None should remember when began
Your tenure here, nor whence you sprung !

Like ancient cromlech notch'd and scarr'd,
I would have had you sadly tow'r
Above this world of leaf and flow'r,
All ivy-tress'd and lichen-starr'd ;

Ambassador of Time and Fate,
In contrast stern to bud and bloom,
Seeming half temple and half tomb,
And wholly solemn and sedate ;

Till, one with God's own works on earth,
The lake, the vale, the mountain-brow,
We might have come to count you now
Whose home was here before our birth.

But lo ! a priggish, upstart thing—
Set here to tell so old a truth,—
How fleeting are our days of youth,—
You, that were only made last Spring ! . . .

Go to ! . . . What sermon can you preach
Oh, mushroom-mentor, pert and new ?
We are too old to learn of you
What you are all too young to teach !

Yet, Sundial, you and I may swear
Eternal friendship, none the less,
For I'll respect your youthfulness
If you forgive my silver hair !

BY THE INDIAN MAIL.

SHE writes in the dear familiar hand,
In the sweet familiar strain,
And the places and faces I used to know
In the days that seem now so long ago,
From the magic glow of that distant land
Stand forth from the past again ;

And those cloudless skies of changeless blue,
And the far-off city's gleam,
And the dusky figures that come and go
In the banyan shade by the bungalow,
Are reveal'd once more to my troubled view
In the flash of a waking dream.

And *she*,—she is there, with her floating veil,
Array'd for the morning ride,
Or, crown'd with stars, at the Governor's ball,
And ever holding my heart in thrall
With the spell of her beauty, proud and pale,
And drawing me to her side.

Ah, me ! what memories quicken and smart
As I muse on that vanish'd time ! . . .
The moments of hope and the months of dread,
And then, that one day,—to be mark'd in red,
Which, because I knew I had gain'd her heart,
Made a heav'n of that golden clime !

Has her love grown cold that I read her words
With such anguish of wild regret ? . . .
Nay ! at sight of but *half* of this tender phrase
My heart had become, in those bygone days,
As grateful and glad as a forest bird's,
And it touches and warms it yet.

But my joy is kill'd by the gnawing pain
Of a wound that can never heal,—
A wound that, in spite of each loving line,
Of each memory binding her soul to mine,
All the days of my life that may still remain
I never shall cease to feel ;

For long ere this letter had left the ship
That was bearing it over the wave,
A message, thrilling from East to West,
Had told me the woman I loved the best
(Alas, for the slips between cup and lip !)
Lay cold in an Indian grave !

ALL SOULS' DAY.

(" LE JOUR DES MORTS.")

YE that are dead and straitly laid to rest
Above whose lowly heads
The wand'ring winds of many winters blow
When the soft falling snow
Makes your green graves as white as live men's
beds,
Is not such slumber blest?

Ye are at peace for ever ; he that strove
Hath reach'd the promised goal ;
The roofless wayfarer hath found a home
Whither can never come
Sting of regret, nor, whilst the ages roll,
Pang of "despisèd love!"

Your very silence is articulate
Of stifled sob and sigh ;—
Of tumult still'd, dissensions quieted,
Wherefore are most men led
To milder mood in your vicinity
Seeing your fall'n estate.

In sweet unconsecrated fields, hard by,
When village urchins play
On summer days, with merry shout and call,
Should the spent cricket-ball
Or hunted insect chance to go your way,
Hush'd is each joyous cry ;

Whilst happy lovers, should their straying feet
Happen to pass you by,
Grow half-ashamed of dalliance, for awhile,
Seeing beyond the stile
Or lych-gate grey, the quiet company
Whose hearts have ceased to beat.

Scarce reason so obscured, or sense so rude
But that some pity, still,

Akin to love, in brain and breast awakes
For your departed sakes
Poor prisoners, whose simple records fill
A peopled solitude !

To-day you hold your court, tho' voice nor sign
Comes from your flow'r-strewn graves ;
Nay, you accept our votive offerings
Even as sleeping kings
Might take their tribute, seeing not the slaves
Bearing the oil and wine ! ,

AT THE CLOSE OF A YEAR.

THE years have been fashion'd by man ; the work
of his meddlesome hand ;—

The landmarks he sets by the way that his
blundering feet have trod,—

He has parcell'd, and weigh'd, and appraised each
pitiful atom of sand,

And mapp'd out, and measured, and reckon'd
The gift of an infinite God.

So the breath of our lips, as we breathe it, is ever
oppress'd by a fear ;—

“How many heart-beatings more ere the sum of
our days shall be told ?

Are the sands already run down ? . . . Have we
come to the end of the year ?

Then those others are nearer at hand that must
number our lot with the old !”

All the same old symbols and sayings as when we
were careless and young ! . . .

The new-born babe with his garland ;—the grey-
beard, wan, with his wings ;—

All the well-known words to be said,—all the well-
known songs to be sung,—

The symbols, and sayings, and songs, that have
turn'd to such sorrowful things !

But the well-known friend at the board ? . . Ah,
there is his empty chair ! . .

So for *us* can the carols seem blithe, or the new
year worthy his crown ? . .

Ah, ye makers and marrers of Time ! ten thousand-
fold better it were

To have left us in peace till the end, with our
days neither number'd nor known !

For why, when our hearts may be brighten'd by
Fancy, Affection, or Trust,

Should we say, “ We are old by the years, so our
days of rejoicing are done ” ?

And be no more esteem'd in the land than those
Indians with pitcher and crust

That are led out to wait for their doom in the
wilderness under the sun ?

The reproach of a year cometh not of an Autumn
mellow with prime,

Of the bough bent down by the fruit,—of the
husk thresh'd clear by the flail ;—

But of barren and profitless Spring, like a Winter
mistaken in time,

When the canker-worm gnaws at the root, and
the blossom is strewn in the gale.

So, altho' the Preacher hath said that our journey
is only a span,

I will not be cast down by the way at these
records of perch, pole, and rod ;—

Our years may be many or few, they are mark'd
out and measured by man,

Let us count by the years of the heart, for the
heart has been fashion'd by God.

THE END.

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